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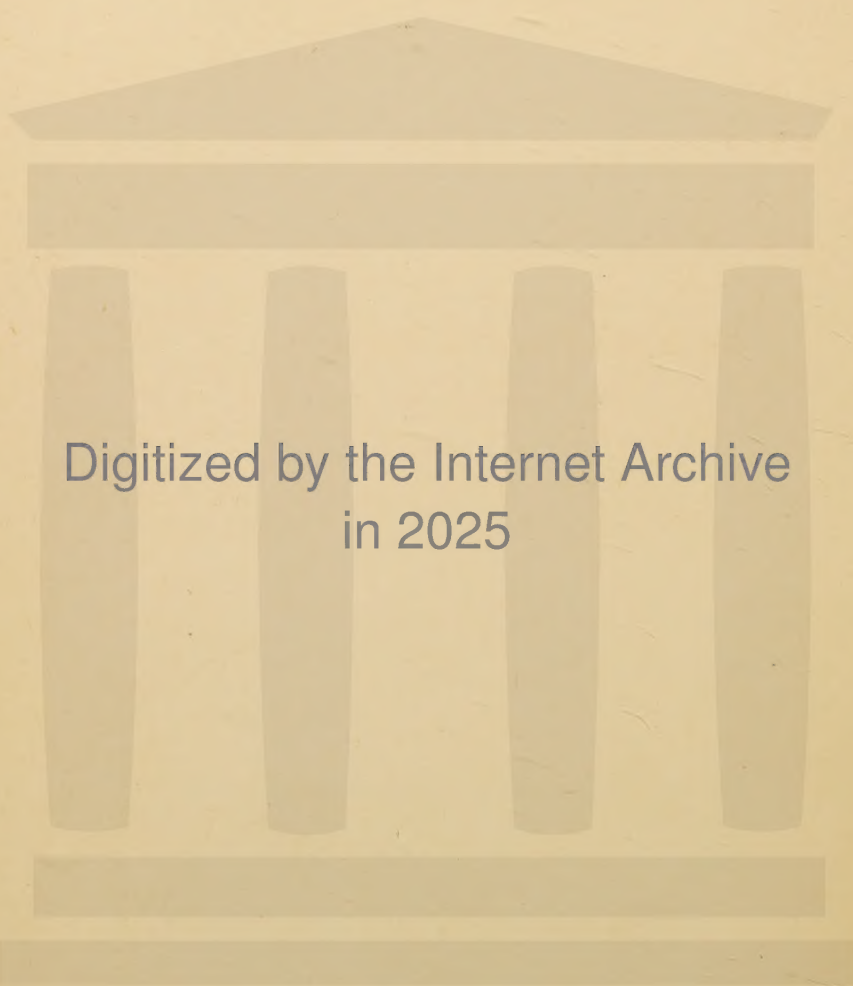
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Book of Crowns & Cottages



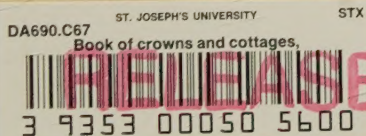
Merton Tower under a "Nunc Dimittis" Sky.

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Book of Crowns and Cottages

By Robert P. Tristram Coffin

Associate Professor of English in Wells College



New Haven: Yale University Press: 1925
London : Humphrey Milford : Oxford University Press



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Printed in the United States of America

The author wishes to thank the editors of the following periodicals for their kind permission to reprint the essays named: the editor of the *North American Review* for *Iffley the Unspoiled*, *Backwaters of Berkshire*, *Cathedrals To Live In*, *Book and Crowns*, and *Saints and Cream and Devon Things*; the editor of the *Lewiston Journal Magazine* for *Pieces of "Eights"*; the editor of the *American Oxonian* for *The "Bitter"*; and the editor of the *Forum* for *The Paradox of Oxford*.

~~DA 630~~
~~C 61~~

*To RUTH, who was the dew and sun
On all the villages and downs,
Who loved me as I learned and loved
Her, the Cottages, and the Crowns.*

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Anabasis

GOING UP" to Oxford!

The very landscape through the train window seemed to be going uphill. The elms were growing taller, the cottages were growing closer to the earth, lovelier, their eaves touching on their garden flowers. As if the winds were great in this place. . . . The winds that sweep around the earth. A place where the Middle Ages still breathe, a university one had caught glimpses of in dreams!

Every now and then a river flashed and showed itself, brighter at every bend. It was leading the way. Somehow it all seemed like going home. Home to those instants that had burned themselves into the brain on the farther and golden side of boyhood. Something lost to be found. Why, this countryside unrolling before me I had always known, the bosky trees with rooks blown about their tops, the haystacks that looked like buns, the cottages that wore golden crusts of thatch. The churches kept well down in the midst of their little houses; but I knew them every stone. The farmers with straps under their knees, I could tell how their eyes twinkled at the corners and how their cheeks were veined with the rose, though their backs were towards me. The soft little bands of clouds that were lying all over the green carpets of this England did not deceive me; I knew they were sheep. Going home . . . Oxford!

Suddenly the river got to be very wonderful indeed, wide vistas of peace, swans. Silver showers were trailing the land with long veils. The sunlight was like a tide between. Blue hills began to stand up against the sky. Forests like squares of patchwork rushed into view, chocolate cakes of furrowed fields. A town of gray stone sprang up, reflected in the water. A great hill sweet with ploughland and crowned with an ancient diadem of trees.

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But my eyes were mostly ahead where something I was searching for was to happen. Where the two long lines of blue hills came down to meet, a mist, perhaps. By George, no! there it was, a row of white flowers, a company of crystals, a band of towers and spires. Oxford! home!

Then they flashed out, and the train rushed into gas tanks, terraces of brick, smoke, shadows of gaunt warehouses, platforms. But as we drew up and stopped I could hear above everything the sound of the swinging open of great doors.

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IT was an imposing room, very big and quiet. And I was only a Freshman, from the other side of the sea, who felt very, very small in the middle of his first Oxford day. There had been so many towers of gray and golden stone, so many unbelievable spires. . . . I felt like a small bubble on the surface of a mighty thing like the sea. I would never be able to fill it, this room of mine in the *College of St. Michael and all the Holy and Undivided Saints of the Seventh Circle, Oxon*. I would always be like a man alone in a cathedral here. The chairs of the room carried out the impression of the cathedral; their backs were carven into the mullioned outlines of Late Perpendicular windows. And I must sit on the red leather sanctuaries of their cushions! The book-case, flanking one whole side of the room, was black, oaken, and alive with all sorts of Mediaeval creatures, drudes, werwolves stalking unicorns, griffins taking morsels from their own wings, all the demon hierarchy of Toledo. My plain *Huckleberry Finn* was to lodge in such Middle Age magnificence! the griffins and unicorns most certainly would shake off the crowns that tethered their necks to the wooden foliage and rend this Huckleberry of nights. The walls were panelled oak. The aged "scout," who looked like a minor seventeenth century mystic at least, as he ushered me in, had dropped a remark or two about Newman and Landor, other dimmer and greater names, names reminding one of gold lace and laurel leaves. From the stray words I could catch among the mellow, golden sentences that rose and fell in Sabbath cadences behind his white beard all the greatest St. Michaelians had lived before me in this room. Or else in rooms right near here. Of course it would be so. It was not enough to have a servant to my room who was a man of awe and had served the great, who was an object of veneration in his own right; but the panelling

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and the traditions must call for a future poet, at least, if not an Archbishop of Canterbury.

The room was high, and the one concession to modern times, the lone electric lamp that descended from wide and noble emptiness on a frayed cord, seemed woefully abashed and ashamed. But not nearly so abashed as I. It was a blighted thing, as I came to discover, later, when I lit it. It gave only the sombrest of feeble light and had to be reinforced by cheerful candles. There were solemn great mirrors over the fireplace and between the windows to multiply the vistas and to magnify my loneliness. I was lonely; though the "scout" was coming and going. His feet made no sound. From his cubby hole under the mysterious stairs curving away into unknown silences above, hallowed by the feet of who knows how many Prime Ministers, that venerable creature was producing piecemeal a whole household equipment. Now a pile of plates appeared: then a kettle steaming hot: knives and forks came straggling in; a white cloth suddenly whisked itself out almost profanely over the dignified tapestry of the table where poets must have written divine things. The "scout" presently vanished for many minutes. Then he reappeared as magically, bent under a mountain of covered dishes and silver tankards. He phalanxed them about my plate, flicked the dust from the gravest of my chairs and half advanced it to the table, coughed discreetly behind his hand, and then with one magnificent flourish of his serving cloth withdrew like a shadow.

I was alone in my grandeur. Alone with the ghosts of the great. I stood a moment in awe. But Landor or not, whatever was under the covers was cooling, and one must eat. I sat down at the table. It was like eating bread and cheese in a church. I glanced out of my windows: my insignificance was only confirmed. Against the sky stood four figures in golden stone, lacking arms and noses here and there to be sure, but looking the serene saints they prob-

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ably were. I looked again upon the table. The silver tankards did not reassure me. They were battered and dented, but on each of them was graven a crown, and from the crown the gryphon of St. Michael's arched his neck and spat his tongue forth in supreme hauteur. College silver, old as the hills most likely. The gryphon was on my plate, too, fiercer than ever; and beneath his arrogance the legend,

QUOD TACITUM VELIS NEMINI DIXERIS.

I must eat off the language of Erasmus and Sir Thomas More! So be it. I lifted a cover, expecting at least a leg of peacock lying in some one of the piquant sauces of Geoffrey Chaucer's Cook, for so much the atmosphere of the room demanded. It was sausages. Little modern and plebeian intruders upon this ancient solitude. This was profanation. But they were browned and showed temptingly at cracks in their skins and smelled like Araby. I examined a tankard next; old wines in old silver, I mused. It was ale. I lifted the silver rim to my lips and took a good draught of the deep brown liquid.

There came over me an astounding metamorphosis. I had felt lost in this great room, feared I could never fill it. I could feel myself growing now. And now I was sure that the room was going to be too small for me. My personality might be cramped here. Perhaps it was the ale which gave the final touch, for the St. Michael's ale has wrought its miracles; but anyway I had been growing all along, it seemed. This was going to be a fine old room to work and sing in. It had its limitations, to be sure; it needed touches of my genius for decoration here and there; but that would come later. I had never tasted such sausages. Once on every man beams that unforgettable day when he eats his first Oxfordshire sausages. I must really put a bit of color and pag-

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eantry into that drab hanging of the mantel. I thought of a good translation of the motto beneath the last sausage,

TO KEEP A THING DARK KEEP IT UNDER YOUR HAT.

Funny old ideas these college founders must have had, queer mottoes on their coats-of-arms. And that must be the window, now that I came to think of it, which Landor shot from the last night of his stay when he scattered the tea party with his shot-gun. It was going to be pleasant living here. Once I could get a few good churchwardens for friends and a good tobacco jar with the St. Michael crest, a picture or two, I should feel at home. Reading would be a delight; reading Kit Marlowe with the mind clothed in slashed doublet and hose. This was no cold tomb of dead minds. It was a ruddy, warm place to smoke and write and smoke again, a place for the pleasant talk of good friends; and the old bigwigs who had gone before would be the first to have it so. *They* laughed and gossiped here, as well as thought; and the hours between lamplight and cockcrow were not wholly prayerful ecstasies or vigils-at-arms before the tapers of great thoughts. *They* had other glimpses here of the New Jerusalems than those unrolled in the *Visio Beatifica*; there were the galleons one sends to sea when pipes are burning fragrantly, the footless birds of Paradise that fly thick as golden dust motes over the lost Atlantis that brown ale lifts up against the setting sun. Learning they found to be a matter of some meditation and many sausages, tankards, and books. The atmosphere of ancient scholarliness, the memories and traditions made their days in this room the merrier. It was good to think within the walls where red-blooded men had lived and thought before them. And so they grew up and went away and became Archbishops instead of bishops, Prime Ministers instead of under-secretaries. And I who could never become either was going, at least, to do my best to take my learning with

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their old ease and gracefulness. I had gotten so far and the tankard was quite empty, when the patriarch of my chamber returned for the dishes. This time, I did not allow myself to be put out by his majestic silences and cloth flickings that were grave as ritual. I turned upon him like a Cavalier and asked would he send some one to see to my couch; perhaps it was the Archbishops who were responsible, but in any case it was leaking excelsior all over the carpet from one of the twin humps of its back. I was at home.

And all my later days at St. Michael's helped me carry out my resolution. I came to feel thoroughly at home even in the face of that magnificent rosewater finger bowl of silver—it was a real bowl and not a pannikin and rivalled the bathtubs of the College for capacity—which Lord North gave his Alma Mater, probably on the eve of the famous kick he gave the Thirteen Colonies to send them upstairs to the glory of the United States of America. Up there on the wall Pitt looked benignly down; *he* applauded my boldness; *he* was on my side of the Atlantic. At dinner I shook those marvels of the silversmith's art, the sugar shakers given by Lord Bryce, who has best explained the wonderful work for which Lord North was indirectly responsible, unabashed over my gooseberry tart. I came to think it very proper indeed to have the literary dictator of a century, lexicographer, and rare philosopher of *Rasselas* look down over my shoulder each night upon very ephemeral brussels sprouts. Mitres and crooks of bygone Archbishops on the walls did not daunt me. I took it as a graceful matter of course when one memorable afternoon the President in flannels bound tenniswards with me let me out with his great, grave key through the postern, at least, of that gate which will never be opened again until a Stuart sits on the throne of England. Under the candelabra of the famous St. Michael limes it was natural to saunter as the fine ladies of the Court of the First Charles in dresses imitating angels used to do. The two Lords Baltimore,

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the Calverts father and son, must have enjoyed kicking their heels on the marvellous velvet of the College grass as much as I did. Though I was from Puritan land, I had no scruples against consorting with the College tortoise that tradition says used to hobnob with the men of gold lace in the days when Oxford was a Royalist camp and St. Michael's melted down all its Mediaeval plate to pay the troopers of the King. It was pleasant being a democrat in the hotbed of aristocracy. And, in any case, Ireton, prince of Puritans, was a St. Michael's man. My Dissenter principles flourished like the bay tree within walls that had housed Newman and High Church thoughts.

Worn tankards and coffee pots that had ministered to genius, chairs and tables worn by many College generations, lovely old windows and arches of the Middle Age builders, picturesque walls in Sir Christopher's best Renaissance plumpness, the eloquence of golden stones and the sanctitude of long learning enclosed in a place of green loveliness—all these are the sweeter for the use of younger hands and minds. What if Wren's chapel have nicks on its portals; there is no fence about it; it is used every day, and care-free youth are not hermits; they are gifted with glorious limbs; and the College is the richer by these tokens of wear. The sanctity of use. This place of the aureoles of tradition is a dwelling place. The cherubs of Grinling Gibbons must expect to lose wings now and then in a house that is lived in whole-heartedly. There are the Founder's bones housed in their carvings of faded gilt lying in the very midst of life, among fresh faces flushed with football and October winds glowing in the candlelight of vespers. One can learn the meaning of Shakespeare's "dusty death" by looking at the stone reminders of departed human glory. Morals and *memento mori's* come home to young men best when the shadows are lengthening across the twilight, when dinner is half an hour away and vigorous and very hungry youths sit among the shadows

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of the chapel. At such a time of yearning for the best, evening stars and pastries, the words of perpetual praise sent up for the Founder, so often reduced to a jargon, become the words of sincerest thanksgiving:

“We yield Thee thanks for Sir Thomas Pope, Knight, our Founder—”

and even his second—or was it his third?—wife is dwelt on more earnestly,

“and the Lady Elizabeth, his wife, deceased.”

For they have bequeathed us a noble home, a place where the best of the years is stored up, against the moth, against the rust. These dim names that keep alive in halting word and crumbling stone have set the sanction of time and the color of stirring events, the fire of great minds upon a place perpetually renewing its youth like the phoenix in men forever young. The past was crimson and gold and green; here it touches the future. Kingly faces in stained glass shine down upon those who are to be the kings of tomorrow. To live in a place like St. Michael's is the best way to study history. One walks through the Wars of the Roses in the gloom of cloisters built in that time; the Reformation speaks in hacked mullions and empty niches. It is a shrine of beauty that haunts one, for centuries of men have lived and dreamed here, embraced beauty or ugliness, done their best and their worst, shed blood and seen visions, eaten and drunk, warred and sung, and gone to their rewards in the world, gone back to green earth forever. But their monuments are here in ivied buttresses and worn stairs, battered chairs, and the smell of great deeds. To open a door is to turn the page of a book. How could plain bread and cheese be anything less than manna and ambrosia when it comes up to you from a buttery that was once a haunt of holy songs, where Benedictine monks prayed seven hundred years ago? The sweetness of their songs has gotten into the walls; it gets into the loaves that lie

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there. One eats the treasurings of the years with one's breakfast. And such things, lichened arches and tracery like the inside of an angel's wing, legend of splendid men and dust of books, help fit one's little life into the great blue-and-gold tapestry of all time. They make one at home in history. After St. Michael's, I could eat in Westminster Abbey with never a qualm of conscience and sleep my sweetest among the tombs.

So the story runs through all the City. Oxford is full of St. Michaels. There are great universities across the Channel, older even than Oxford. But they are not homes. Traditions they have running back into the Dark Ages, legends of the voices of Alcuin and Abelard, but not a single room hallowed by the thoughts of great scholars where the Abelards of the morrow can live. Their students must disperse after lectures to their cheap and tawdry city lodgings, poor nests which another century will tear down to make place for newer and tawdrier. Some of these universities have fine old buildings; but they are locked up at night like the museums that they are. The world is full of museums, beautiful cold places of the dead; and passing through them one gets the bleak idea that all the beauty of the past has stopped breathing; here one sees it, embalmed, dusty, doomed; a few centuries more, and even its mummy will flake apart. One goes through such places with hushed voice and chill heart; one is glad to escape into the sunshine among the cabmen. One cracked and grimed portrait of some college worthy in lace or gown hung above the steam of roast beef and the reek of Virginia tobacco is worth all the icy Madonnas and Mona Lisas in all the museums of the earth. It can teach men more of the majesty of daily living and the loveliness of the world. Pictures one can live with and touch . . . old and fine things for use every day. By such things brief life can bind long art and long wisdom to the wheels of tomorrow's chariots.

We on our side of the Atlantic have too many college sanctu-

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aries that are mausoleums. A graduate becomes great; we fence off his room, put it within railings, mark it with a tablet; we seal it as a tomb. Thenceforth the world is invited to stand in awe and admire; and is turned out sharply at four o'clock when the show is closed. Many a fine old Colonial house full of the sunniest of possibilities in the way of children of our loins and children of our brains has been turned into a sepulchre. We keep it, save it; and saving lose it to life forever. Our university libraries are full of fine old books, our university art collections of splendid pictures; but too often they are chilly places, show places, and they close up their show cases at night. College dining halls with us are apt to be rather bare of beauty; most students have to live among furniture and in the atmosphere of the mail order catalogue. We keep history and old beauty carefully away from the young. We embalm our traditions. We are too New Englandish to live in the parlor, or to open the blinds. Sunlight, we feel, would fade things; so our plush and velvet fall to the moth. If Oxford were over here, we would scatter the students out of their priceless colleges, put a wall around the old towers, and hire a curator and guides. I think we would put the lawns, where famous men have smoked and played at bowls, under glass. Certainly, we would permit no careless boys in their teens to climb Magdalen Tower and sing carols on May morning. The sight of pigs wallowing in the shadow of St. Mary's spire would sicken our souls. No one would be so rash as to allow students to throw bread crusts about in the dining halls with Mediaeval glass in the windows. And most likely there would be fewer babies of a Sunday afternoon in St. Michael's gardens.

Why shouldn't there be babies in a college garden? I know of no better places for them. And I have always thought that Cardinal Newman smiled the more benignly in bronze beside his mossy wall when a pram with a chuckling baby trespassed upon his flower bed. Students must know human nature; it is good to know

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it thoroughly, starting with the rosy-faced *genesis* looking like all April buds and passing thence to boisterous *exodus*, very tight in his gray breeches and bare of knee, treading on the summer clouds as he lies on his back in the grass. College gardens bring these books of human nature to join one's other books. One has only to look up from *We Are Seven*, and several of Wordsworth's originals are picking the Lilliputian British daisies at one's feet. And the studious of human nature can learn more of the art of love-making than from many treatises from some shopgirl walking out with her very splendid young man among the College laurels.

Oxford is a marvellous blend of the many centuries and of the many wholesome things of life. Rare books and rare cattlemen, old and glorious thoughts and ancient and glorious cookery. I wager that many of the suet puddings steaming in college halls around Michaelmas time can claim lineal descent from those concoctions of the Cook of the *Canterbury Tales*; at any rate, ovens that baked in Chaucer's day are still warm and fragrant. The undying fires of Vesta, burning down from the Middle Ages: you will search long in the Bodleian to find a more eloquent witness of man's unity. And no one has put a railing around them or cooled them down to be mausoleums. The youngest cabbages jostle the best Perpendicular Gothic in Christendom. Rosy Life has never left the cobbled alleys: she sings her wares under the leaded windows where scholars dream. The colleges of an earlier day in America could show more of this Oxonian blending of good things. At my own American College Hawthorne was fined for visiting too often the tavern that stood on the very soil of learning. Commencement there in his day was a glorified county fair, with booths and vendors, gingerbread and cider, and fine Latin orations. Even today a county fair, though kept at a respectable distance, is one of the institutions of the College. All the old parish

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churches in England speak in their carvings of this mixture of life; serene and rapt beauty enhanced by the grotesque; holy faces looking down on the fat and laughing monks and the tumbling clowns of the stall ends. Oxford repeats the story; vigorous and jovial boys living in the little quiet rooms that thousands of Friars, Black or Gray, have made holy with their prayers. So the pigs that Puritan times droved and traded in the porch of the ancient Divinity School were not so wholly out of place there. The porch is still called with affection the Pig Market. And the descendants of those pigs still haunt the vicinity.

And the beauty of it all is plain. The boys living in these college rooms, between much of football and much of strawberry jam, grow into the atmosphere and traditions of their rooms, these shrines that have never been too much above the good things to eat and drink which temper high thinking. Living in the places of history, they come to see that the past is flesh and blood, *their* flesh and blood. The old men of wide beards and carelessness in spelling are earlier editions of themselves. So the tombs give up their dead; mankind becomes something of an endless pageant; and they not the least among the hosts. There is a sanctity about a spot where so many purposeful hands and minds have worked before; so many young and eager hands, so many lovely minds weaving aureoles of light through the long nights like candles; so many men who have made the little lights of their dreams the stars for the generations to come.

Every Oxford college sees to it that the young men have the best of all sorts. Each is concerned that they live well; the feeding of them is not farmed out to the uncollegiate and unhistorical stewards of Philistia. St. Michael's buttery and kitchen are as holy ground as the chapel. Once, indeed, they were the holiest places when the Benedictines held forth. They have never lost

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that quality of a sanctuary. So the roasts and the tarts have the sanction of centuries and the seal of the College behind them. The St. Michael's ale has a proud name among college brews: the old St. Michael's port has been mellowing for sixty years among the cobwebs of the cellars. On every hand this thoughtfulness, this long tradition of caring for the undergraduate's needs, is evident. The geraniums of the window boxes are not any geraniums at all. If such green and carmine beauty helps the fortunate youth when he looks from his windows, then the best geraniums are none too good. They are chosen like his tutors. And the wistaria that climbs his wall has its history and its ancestors. The College cares as much for the physical and aesthetic as for the spiritual well-being of its sons; or rather the two concerns have never been separated. Chapel service and service at table are reverend and undivorced rituals. The College prides itself as well on its lime trees and grass, its port and its commons as on its lectures on Plato and its portraits of great sons. Such golden things make the College a home indeed; if his green and growing beauty and the cups of his conviviality are best provided at home, then the undergraduate will not have to fare into the doubtful and unhallowed City places for the pleasure that is his by right of flushing cheek and warm young limbs. So the College is a garden of flowers and an inn.

Almost every good English thing can be explained best by the English inn; sports and statesmanship, songs and charters. For the congeniality and good cheer of that institution have gone over into the lives of those generations who have lived there. And the cumulative process of the years has made a simple, homely hostel a place great and holy, smelling of man. Without the inn, there would be no Chaucer. The colleges of Oxford are inns, too, by origin and by development; and they smell of man most fragrantly. They are a peculiarly glorious sort of inn, because they are also, in architecture and in history, inns that are cathedrals.

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. . . I have an idea that one who eats and sleeps, laughs and thinks for a long time in a cathedral will grow at last to think and act in a cathedral wise. At all events, that is how it seemed to me, among the flowers and the silver tankards of St. Michael's.

The Dean's Croquet

I HAD been two minds, anyway, about accepting the Dean's invitation to play croquet with him on that Sunday afternoon in October. Yet, after all, like Alice on a similar occasion, I felt that invitations from high places were not to be lightly refused. Still I was not sure of my Dean. He lived too near me in the Garden Quad; just above me, in fact. I had already discovered that he did not care at all for the guitar. Nor did he admire rich young voices lifting on high the songs of two hemispheres. He had come downstairs expressly to tell me so on rather too recent a midnight; that is, he had *started* down to do that. But the youth of bygone College generations willed it otherwise; and in the hollows their feet had worn in the winding stairway he had stumbled in the dark and fallen. He fell all the rest of the way to my oak, striking his head on it where it stood ajar. He must have been most woefully stunned, for after a decent interval, with bated breath, we heard his feet ascending again. And I knew that here was a man who could be trusted to be disconcertingly direct, on chapel absences and other things, even over his port, which was the mellowest in Oxford. I knew him for a man, too, properly respected throughout the University. He held all records for speed in getting through the chapel services Sunday evenings. One had no sooner turned eastward to face the altar and begin a muttered Apostles' Creed, than he was through it and back the other way, galloping at his magnificent pace to a triumphant and breathless close. He was so swift that half his congregation were always up and the other half down. The chapel stalls had all the appearance of a collection of jacks-in-the-box. He was splendid.

But it was a deeper reason than all these that made me hesitate to accept the invitation to croquet. From my boyhood I remem-

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bered dim pictures of bitter endings to croquet games. It is one of the few philosophical observations that I have made in my life that more friendships have been lost at croquet than in battle. I made it to my wife, later on when I had got one; and when she doubted me, then and there in the midst of our honeymoon I took her to the veranda overlooking our hostelry's croquet lawn and let her see for herself. It was not five minutes before a retired colonel with silvered hair fell into so violent a dispute with his friend the retired surgeon that the afternoon's play broke up in confusion. Innocent little balls of wood, innocent mallets, a green-sward right out of the Twenty-third Psalm; and yet the combination is as deadly as guncotton. Cotton, harmless stuff of everyday use, a mere dab of nitric acid—of such stuff are earthquakes made. It is the pacific surface of the game that permits terrific seethings of the soul to go on insidiously unnoticed and unchecked. I know whereof I speak, for I have scars on my knuckles today, reminders of my own boyhood volcanoes that went too long unmarked under the sweet pastoral of a croquet game. There is a reason for the Queen's taste for capital punishment; she was a devotee of croquet, and as such a headsman became her better than her crown. It is a game that ought to be forbidden by law.

The combination of this game with my particular Dean was bound to be terrible. So I had other thoughts than those for the mellow tints in Bagley Wood when I climbed Boar's Hill that sunny afternoon. Nor did the Dean's house reassure me. If it had been castellated and battlemented like some of the nightmares of North Oxford, I should not have minded. But it was all too sweet and lovely in its low, cottage attractiveness; it even had hearts cut out of its pea-green blinds. It is in such houses that murders are done.

The Dean came out to meet me all smiles. That, too, boded no good. He showed me flower beds that I felt sure in his heart he did

The Dean's Croquet

not love. The lawn was especially smooth and soft. I expected the worst. But then came the astounding break in the chain of coincidences. The Dean's lady approached. . . . Really, I could think only of Alice as the sharp-chinned Duchess sailed up to meet her. The Dean's lady was as homely as kind and open-hearted people always are; she was so homely that she was absolutely reassuring. She was regal. I knew at once I should enjoy croquet for the first time in my life. We made friends at once, in spite of the sinister presence of her husband, who was introducing me to his daughter most graciously—I *think* it was his daughter; but one can never quite catch anything that English people say when they make introductions. They always sink their voices and purr. There was an infant, too, somewhere between the tea things and the croquet mallets; and I believe it was the son of the house. Anyway, it looked like the Dean's lady. I liked it. I stopped ever so often to poke it playfully with a finger as it lay—too flat I thought at the time—in its pram.

There were perhaps a dozen other people, spectators, I suppose, of the principal match, which was designed as my discomfiture. Tea was most desultory, as only English Sunday teas outdoors can be; here a sandwich, there a well-played shot, croquet balls and butter scones mingled, and everybody talking at once and in all keys. It is a great comfort, though, to the poor conversationalist, for one never needs to finish a sentence; simply a phrase or two will do. Sentences and mallets poised in middle air.

Somehow, at last, we got started on the game that was to be my Actium. Somehow the rest disentangled themselves from wickets and tea tables and formed a sort of gallery. Nothing disconcerts me quite so much as a gallery. There was an electric feeling in the air that here was *the* match. A war of two worlds, they thought; English natural ability versus painstaking American technique. I knew what they were thinking behind their glow-

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ing British faces. Then we chose partners, or rather the Dean chose. He gave me his wife, who was the worst player I believe I have ever met; and he took his own daughter, or at any rate I shall call her so, who was one of the best. The wickets were straightened, colors chosen; and the game was on.

Now, as a boy, I flatter myself that my playing was quite the best in our neighborhood. I could beat all my cousins with one-handed shots. I was a manifest champion. What I might not have done, had I kept up my game till now, there is no telling. But here I was ten years away from my game and three thousand miles off my green. And I say this with an unclouded conscience: had I been the champion of my country and the Dean a mere British novice in the knee breeches of a ten-year-old lad, and had I been paired with the Dean's lady, I would have gone down to ignominy that day. She was exquisite in her inability to make the ball go in any required direction. She could miss a wicket that a blind man could not have failed to make without trying. She was so bad that she was really superb. Quite the loudest of the afternoon's applause followed her shots. It was wonderful to see her slice the ball around the closest of wickets. A billiards expert would have given much to have the reverse english she put into her strokes. Not that I cared. I had nothing but relief. I admired her for it. If it had not been for my partner, I think the game might have ended like so many of the games of my youth; and I or the Dean, or both of us, might have worn bandages. The Dean's lady saved the day.

Early in the game the Dean showed me the black designs he had had in his heart in inviting me hither. He painstakingly drove my ball into the culvert at the bottom of the garden where for the most part, save for one or two very brief intervals, I remained for the afternoon. Among the weeds down there I made my first acquaintance with nettles. It was pure and premeditated malice on the Dean's part. Whenever I emerged by some marvel of lofting

The Dean's Croquet

skill, it was only to be sent back. Whatever defects my strokes might have had, they were mercifully hidden from the gallery by ten feet of green England. The Dean had other plans for his wife. He purposely kept her upon the grounds to amuse the spectators. He used her as a target for an extra shot whenever he imagined he needed one. He never did need one, as it turned out; but he kept her there just the same. I did not have even the constant relief of seeing her miss her strokes near by me. But in his too great eagerness to overwhelm me utterly the Dean defeated his own ends, which, I am firmly convinced now, were nothing short of manslaughter. I could not get into a white heat, when my heart was brimmed with laughter. Now had he given me his daughter, who was a good player, as I judged from the genuine applause that came from the unseen gallery from time to time when it was her turn, I shudder to think how the affair might have ended. It was a stroke of fortune for one of us that day, I am not sure which, this misjudgment of the Dean.

The game was over at last. I could return to the upper air. Tea was continued. The last of the cakes were disposed of. We all said goodbye and what a splendid afternoon's sport it had been. The Dean in seeing me off fairly beamed. He said he did not remember when he had so thoroughly enjoyed a croquet match before. He radiated. But I knew better. And I shall always know that to his dying day he will regret a slip of his which kept his trim lawn from becoming a shambles.

May Day Morning

MAGDALEN TOWER

FAR up against the strewn rosepetals of the morning clouds the larks are going higher and higher to be the first to greet the sun of full springtide. Now they are in it, and they turn to flakes of gold; they drown themselves in the light; and their ecstasy comes down like notes of far flutes. This is the first May Day song, and it is as old as the dew.

But the four thousand who are standing on Magdalen Bridge are waiting for another. Their upturned eyes are on the pinnacles of the Tower of Lilies that goes up into the heart of the morning. Gray Magdalen Tower holds up the crystal arch of day; it glows with a rose hue at its top, for the rose of the dawn is opening beyond Headington Hill. The day of the year and the day of the song! Some of these listening people have heard the song almost every May of their lives. And yet here they are again. It has become a white milestone on the road of life. But some of us are listening for the first and, it may be, the last time. And for us the Tower song will be through all the years a fountain of beauty, a wellspring of youth. There are men of books below and men whose only lines to read have been the furrows over the hills; masters of music whether of delicate instrument or of a drover's whistling in the morning wind. They are all one on this May Day, scholars and yeomen.

A cockney horse dealer of the midlands has brought his cockney London brother here to impress him with a thing not to be had in London. The City man is all condescension, as yet. Two shopgirls, whose mornings are most precious for their complexions' sake, have sacrificed their sleep and are yawning and waiting a little impatiently. A beggar woman, bound Marstonwards to win a gate

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to tend for pennies, could not tell you for the life of her why she should tarry here. A man with evil wrinkles seaming a face centuries old at forty is very much vexed because some belated boys are coming up shouting and making confusion with their bicycles. Little boys in Eton jackets and gowns with mortarboards *sans* tassels on their heads are standing as quietly as men whose colthood is behind them many, many hills. An undergraduate has his face tilted upwards, looking as Abelard must have looked, beside a cottager of Hinksey who makes one think of Saint Francis. An officious postman pedalling ruthlessly on his tricycle through the crowd suddenly abandons his zeal in His Majesty's service, draws up to the curb, tilts his double-visored cap sidewise out of his eyes, and turns up a golden lily pad of a moustache to the glowing lily of old stone. A bell somewhere slowly strikes six times. A great hush, like the sudden shadow of a cloud, passes over the people. The last whisperings die away. Hark! they are singing!

Faint and far up, at the very top of day, trembling voices of young boys, fresh as the dew, so small, so lovely, as if they were singing across the world,

Te Deum Patrem . . .

They die away . . . pieces only of treble notes come down. Silence. Again a few stray syllables. Then a long, long silence. . . . They are done.

Only the little shopgirl, whose hat is like an ugly mushroom, cannot keep back the tears that have welled up suddenly in her wistful eyes; in the midst of her tawdry finery two tears like large dewdrops roll down. And a woman in poor, cheap clothes twists and untwists her thin hands and has the purest holiness and the thousand jewels of the morning on her face. The London cockney has a look of fear almost behind his eyes. A farmer bows his beard deep into his bosom, and is back four thousand years with the

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patriarchs. The man with the seamed face goes blank, and his chin of a sudden goes up like a boy's. The boys *sans* tassels are nothing in this world but newly opened primroses. The beggar woman's old face lights up for an instant with the look on a little girl's face when she handles dolls. The undergraduate and the cottager are twin Easter lilies. The postman twitches in his generous moustache for sheer emotion.

Then the spell that was white eternity snaps. The silence goes out like a lamp. People move and jostle one another. Loud voices call out, men whistle; every one starts off in his own direction, laughing and hurrying to the day's business. For another year the song is done.

This is the second May Day song, and it, too, is very old. It is not so old as the salute which the larks give to the sun of spring, perhaps; but it is as old as the man who first noticed the larks, the man who first danced out to meet the sun of May as it danced on the rim of the world. The words are Latin which the boy choristers have sung on the top of Magdalen Tower; people will tell you that their song is a Mediaeval hymn. You can find it in old songbooks. Yes, and in the songbooks before ever there was a Troy. There is the beautiful legend of the Colossus of Memnon in Egypt; the great king in stone who sits looking into the east rings through all his veins of rock as the rising sun bathes him in light. Here the story has come true; and the rising English sun has turned Magdalen Tower and stone into psaltery and harps. It is a song older than Babylon. It is the song of the love of loveliness that is in men's hearts. It is the ancient hymn to light, to the return of beauty. It is older than most hills. It was old when the tinsel-bearded Assyrians heaped up their pyramids of skulls; it is as young, too, as the boys whose faces have shone this morning to hear it. It is your song and mine. And the man who sows our bread knows it as we who eat the bread. This is a thirst all men

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have, good men, bad men, rich and poor, the thirst for beauty which is joy and the beginning of wisdom and all holiness. If we doubt sometimes that there be a God, we need only to go to Magdalen Tower on the first morning of May; we shall see Him shine out at thousands of uplifted eyes. This Tower is an altar of the ages. We have bowed down our hearts to it and lifted up our eyes. And under this blue English sky today we have been in the oldest and best church in the world. We have led in the May. We have skipped like kids on the threshold of spring, and all the valleys have burst forth into singing and the hills have clapped their hands. We have worshipped. We have worshipped the holiness of beauty.

The Jewel of Landladies

IT was in the year of the "bursting of the barriers" that Ruth and Hal and I found Mrs. Mamble, or rather *I* found her. For she was *my* achievement, Hal and Ruth were the mere *impedimenta* of my triumphant campaign; and I shall always look upon that day as a red-letter one in my career.

It was the year after the War, and the sacred limits of residence, fixed for Oxford undergraduates within the magic circle of a mile and a half from Carfax since the time of Alfred or of the holy virgin Frideswide at least, had been swept away by the tides of Oxonians returning from Picardy and Flanders.

CEDUNT ARMA TOGAE.

The young men were too many for the lodgings of the City. So we were given leave to seek "digs" in the little villages of the Thames valley, license to overflow upon the beautiful hills that wall in Oxford with blue and far loveliness. Some of us overflowed even the hills and out into the center of Berkshire. I think one or two chose Stratford-on-Avon, though I distinctly remember that one imaginative man was told by his college that London was not *usually* considered a suburb of Oxford. At any rate, we scattered to lanes where the primroses grow wild and the cottages wear thatch, to villages where railroads are half the world away and philosophers still sit upon the stoops in patched corduroys that their fathers sat in before them. Horspath, Wytham, Hinksey, Yarnton, the twin Baldons March and Toot, the one having for its heart a noble and ancient village green where ducks hold sedate councils, the other having a woman who witches away rheumatism with old rhymes; Sandford Dry where the ale has gotten the honey of the bees into its body, Sandford Wet dreaming under a haze of opalescent may-flies the immemorial peace of still waters slipping between green

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pastures, Forest Hill where Milton wed, Temple Cowley, Bablock Hithe. Names like their ale, mellow and twilit, names full of the larks so eternally over their casements and thatches. Villages where the cows come home to be milked under the church tower and along the cobbled streets, under the windows where the evening with its nightingales and smell of dews comes in upon your books. . . . Villages whose days are pastorals and nights a benediction.

Iffley was our choice. I, the captain of our campaign, had already determined that. I had known it of old, before I went off to the wars. I had quarrelled with the ancient dame who practises piracy in the name of some Iffley tyrant long since dust on the highroad, who takes her toll of halfpennies before she lets the lovers of peace into this home of it. I had tasted the cream of its cows that sleep all the nights of the year in its meadows, lain in its grass among the new year's snowdrops, known the mellow wit of its ditchers and thatchers over the *Tree Inn* ale, seen its people's faces by candlelight through the windows. There were no two ways about it. Iffley alone would do. And so I was like a Balboa showing Hal and Ruth the glories of my Pacific; here was the house where the lady of the Burne-Jones hair had given me lavender from over the wall of her garden and told me the tribulations of her bees, here were the Mediaeval beasts that chased their own tails down the most perfect horseshoe Norman arch in Christendom, here I had met the man in the derby who really belonged in the Sicily of Theocritus and who told me of ghosts and his faith implicit in the evil eye, and here I had taught the boys with October apples for cheeks baseball to go with their cricket.

Perhaps I ought to explain Ruth, seeing that we, Hal and I, were scholars of Oxon seeking a lodging place. But one could better attempt to explain wild roses or the reason why the birds all start to sing when the edge of the sun comes over the rim of the



Cottage, Tubney, Berkshire.

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world. I can only say that other barriers than those of the limit of residence had been broken down. In those glorious days treading on the heels of the War, the University authorities, heaping benignity upon blessing, had seen fit to forgive us who had gone to war our matrimonial trespasses and allow us to bring our families back with our books. And so my wife was there, with her eyes glowing at the roses cascading over Iffley walls and the babies cascading over the roses.

And Ruth and Hal loved Iffley as I knew they would love it, with a love at first sight that would not be denied. But it was one thing to love, another to find a lodging. We began at the mill wheel and went straight through the Village trying at every door, big house and little, to convince the inmates that we would make desirable lodgers. Later on, when we were completely adopted of the Village, we blushed inwardly at our transatlantic temerity which had led us breezily to doors that terms of board-and-keep had never profaned these three or four centuries. We were determined that we would force our way into this sanctuary; so no latch went unlifted. But we were attempting a thing like proposing the abolition of the British House of Lords, like suggesting that British workingmen take off their coats and vests when the weather gets too hot. We were butting our heads against the fine granite of precedent. At the great house we were smiled upon with patient benevolence; one did not care to take lodgers. At the cottage round-eyed housewives, with cherub faces peeking from behind their aprons, gazed in full awe upon us; they had never done such a thing, neither they nor all their ancestors before them. It was beyond *them*. They clasped and unclasped their hands under their aprons in agony. They had no rooms fine enough for University gentlemen, least of all for a University gentleman's wife! We felt like criminals to think of such a thing. They were simple folks; their cooking was the cooking of amateurs, their food was the food

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of village folk. Who could tell what Petroniuses these Americans were—rich! finicky!—humming birds' tongues likely!

We did our best to tell them that, though Americans, we were not used to living in marble and eating off silver all the days of our lives, that English village food and cooking were the stuff that all our dreams were made of, that if they had hens we would love them and never frighten them off the stoop or interfere with their laying, that we would fancy nothing so much as a cow, wellspring of morning and evening delight, to make a friend of, that we would even countenance a pig, if he weren't too near the house and didn't squeal too much. We painted our passion for steamed pudding; our mouths watered with our eloquence for gooseberry tart; we even feigned a great love for brussels sprouts. But it was no use. We parted company. We worked singly, hoping that our numbers would not at once appall. We rhapsodized singly over beds that were made of husks, over rooms that had flagstones for floors. But we were always unsuccessful.

Hal was particularly so. I shall always think he ruined some of our most picturesque prospects. I should have known better than send him to interview the house with the nasturtiums trained over the porch and settles under the rosetrees. He spoiled our chance, too, at the little place where the tiles were gone from the roof and one could have had glimpses of the stars from one's bed. Hal always allows the poet in him to come to the surface too easily at the sight of crooked panes and wallflowers on the thatch. He was brought up outside of New England. He was too eager, too willing to find *any* solution to the terrific difficulties the Iffley housewives found in the way of admitting us. There was the wife of the Village policeman—though why the Village needed such a man I never could imagine, then or later. Hal got so enamoured of her kettle that was rocking full of song on her hob that he really was impossible. Her house was all one big room below, where she and her

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arm of His Majesty's law lived and slept; though there were four rooms upstairs. How *could* a poor woman let her upper chambers and have lodgers passing up and down the single stairway at all hours? Hal gave his imagination free rein. . . . We could use a ladder to one of the windows, could make a flight of steps outside. Whereas all he needed to do was to tell her to take herself and her man of law off and go live in the inn next door, and we would keep her house and she could do for us using the inn as a base. Simplicity itself! It was in ways like that Hal lost us our chances.

Ruth, I believe, might have saved us, for as a last resort she might have thrown herself upon the mercies of womankind and won the Village wives. But she, too, was too clearly in love with the Village. It showed too brightly in her eyes. One must not be too enthusiastic with the English—at first, anyway. After one gets to know them, one can be warmer. If you let a cottager see that you love to have honeysuckle creeping in through your windows, she will think how the rain will also come in at the broken panes. If you praise her open-fire cooking arrangements, she will get to thinking you are afraid of the soot falling upon your sausages. Laud her carpets, and she will conclude that you have noticed the spot where Johnnie upset the inkpot. You have to go forwards backwards with these people. Now I would be rather cold, or at least cool, at first. . . . There really was not much to be said for the furniture; and I would make a point of wiggling the broken arm of the overstuffed chair. Leaded panes were all right in their way, but they *did* let the wind through, didn't they? . . . And before a minute had passed, I would have the woman blazing in defence of her Lares and Penates, holding them up against all the world, swearing that they were good enough for Lady So-and-So's praise, and implying that certainly people from overseas could not go farther and find better. And then is the time to put down the first week's rent money. Several times that day I

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was almost at this point; but the change in me must have been too sudden or else, and oftener, Ruth or Hal put in a dejected appearance after the latest failure and sided too soon with the landlady on the excellence of her chairs.

But I had the garden wall between me and my aides when I unearthed Mrs. Mamble. Straight from my heartrending fiasco at the cottage with geranium boxes under all the windows and vistas down arches of elms into hills that must have been in Beulah Land, I stumbled into *The Terrace* and found the best landlady in the United Kingdom. The cottage of the window boxes, I found out afterwards, and from no less an authority than Mrs. Mamble herself, would not have done at all. An army officer and his wife lived there, and they sometimes had the most violent quarrels. . . . You would hardly believe it, but that man's temper must have been ruined by service in Ireland, for one morning when his wife had burned the sausages for the third time that week he rose in wrath and trampled the innocent victims of his wife's carelessness. We would have courted disaster there! But it was with a choking emotion in my throat at the time that I turned into *The Terrace*, the last house but one in the Village. It may have been the thought of those two bare chances remaining or the despair from my encounter with the house of the burnt sausages; at all events, I threw myself recklessly upon Mrs. Mamble. She was kneeling in her tiny front garden with a desperate smudge over one eye. I am afraid I must have had a biting sarcasm in my voice when I demanded, "You haven't any rooms to let, have you?" For she rose with an uprooted geranium in each hand and sailed into her house with a sign for me to follow.

I remember almost nothing of what followed, save that teetering on the arm of a low easy-chair that some of my most scholarly meditations were to grace for two years I added and divided pounds, shillings, and pence in a golden haze. I must have talked,

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too, and wittily, for I remember Mrs. Mamble's white teeth in the smiles that later became a great part of our household furniture. I think I even told her funny stories. It is a rare stroke of genius I have sometimes. One thing I recall vividly. I asked her about the people in the house adjoining hers where no one had answered my knock. Mrs. Mamble told me I was jolly lucky to catch Miss Bogges out, for she was a spinster who had soured on all the world, of most uncertain disposition, and had been known to scald tramps. What with one thing and another, by the time Ruth and Hal joined us outside in the tiny garden plot, Mrs. Mamble and I were fast friends; and I was able to present them to their future landlady in my most care-free manner. It was then, I think, that Hal sat down in Mrs. Mamble's most recent excavations for sheer relief. Ruth said afterwards that they knew the instant they saw my face we were residents of Iffley. It was like a sunrise.

After we had sobered down a bit, of course, we were bound to see specks in our amber. Our sitting room was undeniably open to the street; just the scrap of flower bed two handkerchiefs wide, then the low wall, and then the cobbles where all Iffley passed by a dozen times a day. I suppose practically every soul in the Village used to enjoy our late breakfasts in Iffley sunlight here quite as much as we did. Our best friends later on would accost us with, "Let's see, it was eleven this morning, wasn't it?" and chuckle as only English friends can. The small boys were the worst. Glances were not enough for them; they stopped and hung on the wall open-mouthed. We did not mind the Iffley boys so much, either; and they finally got used to us. But the boys from Cowley were incurable. These aliens goaded us to madness. They got so bad that one morning Hal, who was dissecting our loaf, seized the bread in one hand and the bread knife in the other and rushed to the window brandishing his weapons. I have never seen boys vanish so quickly. Probably the films of the Wild West had led them to

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expect something like this. Unfortunately for them, they ran in the wrong direction up the single street and so were woefully late to school and got, as we most sincerely hope, a proper caning. Hal was like that. He even waved a kipper to Miss Wood when she turned a very discreet look towards our windows one particularly late morning when our breakfast collided and coalesced with our lunch. Ruth and I didn't so much mind Miss Wood; as my partner she had trumped my ace at a Village whist "drive" and lost me a prize worth 3/6. We knew her ever so slightly. Anyway, she was rather frigid to Dissenters, as she regarded all outside her church; and I am sure she held rather strong opinions on the subject of late rising. And probably on kippers.

There was the chimney, too. Mrs. Mamble, who would hum her sweetest when there was not a scrap of food in the house, had neglected it. In the face of most dire penalties for unswept flues, she had let it clog up. She had laid our fire each morning on the edge of the abyss. Of course we never knew. Chimney sweeps we thought had gone out with Charles Lamb. We never suspected cottage flues of having soot. And one morning the disaster came. Ruth's hands and mine are clean. I cannot say so much for Hal. He was clearly an *accomplice after the fact*. Ruth and I were away overnight. But Hal, rising to breakfast alone, had put up the tongs on the fender and stretched newspapers across them to make the fire kindle quicker. This was all in the usual order of things. But while he turned to cut bread to toast the papers caught fire, swept up the chimney, and ignited the soot. Mrs. Mamble returning from the Village shop with the breakfast bacon saw geysers of flame pouring from her house. The Village surged forth. The blaze made a fine show; the street filled with excited people. And all the while Hal went on toasting his bread little suspecting that the crowd had gathered for anything other than a demonstration of

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toasting in the American style. The flames spent themselves at last. Luckily for Mrs. Mamble and for us, the Village policeman was away in Abingdon probing the mystery of the disappearance of Georgie Moore's sow on the eve of her presenting her master with a litter. So Mrs. Mamble went unscorched by the law. But we all had our lesson. For months afterwards rafts of loosened soot would descend unexpectedly upon our steak warming on the hob and make our dinner a thing of sackcloth and ashes.

The house itself, after some of the thatched miracles we had seen, was a disappointment, at second view. I don't imagine it was over one hundred years old, if that. It was too even, and it had plain tiles, and it did abut on the unsociable Miss Bogges. She could have ruined even a cottage with nothing but wallflowers for thatching. Just to see her wheel in her bicycle at tea time was an indictment of human nature. She fairly reeked unfriendliness. I have known her to let the little postgirl ring her bell for ten minutes before she deigned to come. And then she slammed her door so hard as to jar Mrs. Mamble's plaster-of-paris cherub off its moorings and break it to bits on our dresser. This last was not, however, an overwhelming disaster, for us, at least. Mrs. Mamble's taste in decoration was not the best. Whoever could have found it worth while writing to the surly Miss Bogges I don't know. Ruth believes it was a bill.

Within our cottage there were defects. Mrs. Mamble, as I say, was not gifted with an instinct for the best decorations. It took a deal of Ruth's innate diplomacy to transfer one after another of our landlady's pictures to the hall. She had to replace them each time with one of our own and one, too, that had such associations as would convince Mrs. Mamble that without it we were disconsolate. The hall got to be a chamber of horrors. One did not linger in it after wheeling in one's bicycle. Hal's bicycle, which he got at

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a bargain and which finally broke down for good on his Devon trip on the downs above Lynmouth, did not add to the cheerfulness of the place. Ruth's greatest triumph was the lithograph of the United Order of Foresters. It had belonged to Mrs. Mamble's husband who had been lost in the War. It had the place of honor over our mantel. I could not believe my eyes when I came home one day and found it hung over Hal's bicycle. But Ruth made one slip that I found impossible to forgive. Mrs. Mamble in company with her prospective second husband had gone to the orgies of St. Giles Fair. She had brought home two hectic *papier mâché* vases, the apples of her eye. In an unguarded moment, when called on to admire, Ruth said they were lovely things, and with a catch in her voice. . . . That night they appeared on our mantel, and there they remained. Neither of us dared to disturb them. So the United Order of Foresters was avenged.

One of the major faults of our cottage was that it was altogether too small. When we had guests in for tea, we had to overflow into the hall and halfway upstairs. But if the three chambers above were tiny, too, they were most delightful. In our room one could stretch one's arm out of bed into the silver witchery of moonlight where nightingales were singing. The woodlands across the way overarched our casements with boughs. The owls made our chamber musical with their liquid love complaints all the night. I know of not a single poet this side of Chaucer who could describe the mornings in our room. Sweet white light pouring like clear waters out of the east, dewdrops like belated morning stars burning on the ivy tendrils at our windows. The angel down that is the English morning clouds over the elms. Rooks stirring. Larks singing unseen at the top of the crystal sky. And choirs of cheerful sparrows hopping almost in the bowl and pitcher to waken one from the last, light sleep. All birds were entuning their myriad songs under the blue welkin,

The Jewel of Landladies

*“Upon my chambre-roof withoute,
Upon the tyles, al a-boute,
And songen, everich in his wyse,
The moste solempne servyse
By note, that ever man, I trowe,
Had herd; for som of hem song lowe,
Som hye, and al of oon acorde.*

*Was never y-herd so swete a steven,
But hit had be a thing of heven.”*

And if we had no windows glazed with Mediaeval glass telling the clear, blue and golden and crystal tale,

*“bothe text and glose,
Of al the Romaunce of the Rose,”*

still we found in each day's awakening something of the beauty of the wide wild rose, fragrance of dewy petals, earth's loveliest song which is the morning's, a fairest and clearest romance, the romance of the returning sunlight and the blowing of the rose of dawn.

Whatever shortcomings Mrs. Mamble's little house may have had among the picturesque cottages of Iffley, Mrs. Mamble's garden at the back of her house more than made up for them all. Of course, it was mainly vegetables; but a vegetable garden in England can be queenly even in its cabbages. Poets can write in such places. For always flowers and bees and trees of blossom and fruit mingle with the potatoes and leeks. One of the varieties of onions there has even taken to itself the name of Shalott, echo full of the haunting laughter of pale ladies of romance. That vegetable put a flavor of far lands into our baked beans. Mrs. Mamble's garden was large; it ran in behind the house of the

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singed sausages even and, of course, behind Miss Bogges'. At the latter place it was overgrown with rank nettles most fittingly; when that householder, whose milk of human kindness had so sadly curdled, came in from stoning the latest dog from her door, she had only a patch of stinging weeds to look at while she took her tea. And that was all she deserved. But everywhere else the garden was a San Salvador of smelling and blossoming things. Hollyhocks marched along the turfed walks. Pleached pear trees leaned against the fourteen-foot wall that shut one in from all the world. In such a harbor of quiet one could be alone with his own heart until he could hear it sing. Only the distant Cumnor and Shotover hills showed above the wall and the more magnificent of the Iffley elms where the cuckoos told off endlessly the sleepy, sunny hours.

This garden was the sweetest spot in the world to house a baby in; I can never think of the soft English skies without remembering the ten pink toes of our first-born against them taking the sun in the pram. And later on there were fine Derbies run here, and myself it was playing the horse, up and down the velvety grass. In a far corner of the enclosure was a place for Mrs. Mamble's kind of hens, the breed which never lays but which sings as if bursting with the sunshine. Their cockerel could have given lessons to Daun Chaucer's chanticleer in the art of finding choice tidbits and calling his wives to admire and ending always by swallowing them himself. I feel that he knew we were Americans, for he always called his hens back from the wire when we were near and strutted before us with terribly flashing eyes with flecks of British red in them. He resented the scraps of food we brought him to the end, though he gobbled them once our backs were turned. In the middle of the garden was a bricked pool, a lichened well of Narcissus with pebbles like jewels of blue and yellow at the bottom. But Little Bill, Mrs. Mamble's son, chose

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it for a nursery of frogs; and it lost its charm when the frogs grew too many and the water too low to support the frog colonies.

There is a canker to every rose. Our garden had its pig. I should like to pass over this flaw in its beauty; but I cannot. We had been afraid of pigs from the first in our search for lodgings in Iffley. Our destiny found us out. And Mrs. Mamble's pig, I am sorry to say, was one too frequently inclined to motherhood. . . . On the approach of these occasions of increase in her race, she was a great trial to Mrs. Mamble and her prospective husband, Big Bill. She would uproot her fences and spread destruction over the garden. Twice she widened her circle beyond the garden and inflicted savage damage on all Iffley. The policeman had his eye on her. On one day of terror she bit off the head of chanticleer himself and left Mrs. Mamble's henhouse a home of widows. It may have been the fright they got, but after that the hens broke forth into laying. . . . Evil customs are the parents of good laws. . . . But many a day, when Mrs. Mamble went to market, Ruth had to stand guard with a pitchfork to remind Lily—that was the name of the beast, no less—that pens were meant to remain in. I grow bitter when I recall Lily; she spoiled one whole afternoon of tennis for me. And that, too, after I had saved one of her numerous infant offspring by sacrificing the household brandy and swaddling it at our hearth.

I suppose Big Bill must be set down as a flaw, too; at least as something not an asset in the *ménage* of Mrs. Mamble. He began as our landlady's knife-boy and ended as her husband. But we were never blinded to his character. To be sure, he did get us wood to burn when, in a time of coal strikes, our fuel failed us; but I don't think he went far enough from home to get his firewood. Several of the most delightful of the Iffley stiles vanished from the sight of men. He was decidedly not an ornament when

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he sat over Mrs. Mamble's grate devouring all the poor lady's buns and steeping himself in her tea. And, when all is said, he was, as his future wife described him, "a proper poacher." I don't say the fellow was not gifted with a fine sense of humor; he was; but, between the *Tree* cups and the rabbit warrens on Rose Hill when the nights were moonlit, he found no time to attend to any serious business in this world other than courting a woman too much fine gold for his having.

Little Bill was decidedly an asset, even though he did get me almost into the clutches of a keeper when he took me holly gathering against Christmastide. I thought the trees I was so energetically breaking down were on the Shotover commons; but it appears they weren't. Bill the Smaller was a burden to Ruth, too, in his catastrophes at the Village school. She had to extricate him a dozen times a month. But he was such a round-eyed and rapt listener to wonders in America that one could forgive him anything, especially in a land where it is sometimes hard to find a good listener to American tales other than those of moose and Red Indians. He was as chubby a specimen of English boyhood as one will meet in a day's journey in the heart of England. His cheeks were the color of rosehips. He taught us all the games that we have lost in crossing the Atlantic; and we taught him the games we have invented. I think he will be celebrating the Fourth even now.

The hearth of Mrs. Mamble is certainly to be remembered as a golden thing. Many a cockcrow has caught Hal and me writing our verses between the additions and subtractions of pounds and pence whereby we tried to see how much tobacco we could afford and yet go warm and fed. It was not a grand hearth, and the iron grate did have the habit of falling in two and spilling our fire. But it was full of the pictures of Carcassonne; and we had the stars in our minds as we watched the coals. The nights around us

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were radiant with the aureoles of peace. Candlelight and the kettle singing . . . and the dreams that are old as firelight and young as youth. It was here we two planned *magnum opus* after *opus*. It was here I rocked my first baby to sleep with a lullaby, and Ruth sitting by my side. . . . If ever there be little unseen creatures that watch over human happiness at hearthside, they lived here; we heard their wings. And it is that hearth of Mrs. Mamble's that I shall be bearing in mind when all the grander hearths I have known have fallen into the dust of things forgotten.

And Mrs. Mamble herself—how should one describe the perfect landlady? Shall I begin with her personal appearance? She was not always tidy by any means. Her hair was like sticks and was never so much like a bundle of faggots as when she had dressed it on gala occasions when she ushered in our guests. She had a particularly errant gown of black that was our despair. Bill the Big bought her a tam-o'-shanter to complete her general rakishness when she went Oxonwards. Separately considered her qualifications were far from perfection. Would it be her lineage you would care to examine? She was proud to boast herself the daughter of a publican. She told spicy tales of the days when her prosperous parent in the beer trade held forth at Marlborough. Her first husband's calling of head gardener on a big estate and all his long pageant of faithful ancestors from that first ancestor brought from Italy to train English cabbages in the way they should go—these things had not been able to purge the inn from her blood; she was a gypsy to the marrow. Her cooking was not the thing that won us. She needed high moments of inspiration to do her best. At the holiday season she could make steamed puddings against the world; those typical English ensembles of fruit and rind, sweet and bitter, spices and fancy, made up weeks in advance and left to the mellowing magic of time to ripen into

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miracles unspeakable. She could make a rhubarb tart that made the heart flutter. But for weeks when the rapture was gone from her soul, her roasts and puddings were flat and tasteless. For three whole weeks once we had nothing but canned meat. She lacked imagination, like most British housewives, in vegetables. Her potatoes were always anaemic, her artichokes like leather.

In other ways she had profound limitations. Her pride often got the better of her station. She flew into a towering rage when the house was presented with a charity loaf, much better than the one the Baker, who was using up War stores, left on our stoop. She was all for pitching it after the donors who had been mindful of her widowhood. But Ruth and I seized upon the offending loaf and devoured it. Her pride as a publican's daughter kept her aloof from the mere carpenters' wives and gardeners' daughters of our Village. Often her aloofness made her suffer long weeks of loneliness. I don't think her management of the baby she had taken to care for was all that was wise. She fed the poor mite sops of crusts dipped in the most virulent tea: she even came to give it whole cups of tea before it had attained the dignity of eight months. Bacon rinds are not to be given to babes-in-arms, in America, at least. But the English have other ideas. Generally with nurses of Mrs. Mamble's class it is a case of "they gets what we gets."

It must have been the combination of her qualities that made up the magic whole that was Mrs. Mamble. Drab or dull, the color of most Oxon landladies, she never was. When she sulked, she was pitchy midnight; when she glittered, it was with the fine splendor of icicles in January sunshine. Black diamond or white, she was always a diamond. Her carelessness was inspired: she could carry off the littered neglect of her house like a queen. She had a talent for disarray. One could forgive her leaving the household larder bare, when she eked out eleventh hour make-

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shifts with song and a boisterous cheerfulness. She was clear water and shining pebbles even when the sky went in clouds. The salt of her wit was never so zestfully sprinkled as when she used it to season a mutton chop that was clearly a mistake. When the bright gods had her, Mrs. Mamble rose supreme above torn cuffs and spotted tablecloths, like a sylph of the upper air with the rainbow for her wings. She was a Cavalier, if ever there was one, and her table could go bare, her hearth lie cold ashes, and hunger and poverty sit on her stoop; and she could go singing to meet the world and come off with the beauty of flying banners. Life was one whimsicality after another to her, and she the mayfly that dances a green and golden dream. The day at hand was her universe, yesterday a forgotten shadow, tomorrow a bare chance of luck; she shone as the dew shines in the sun that will quench it. She was a butterfly that could sing. Ants can labor and winters come; I know where I shall always find everlasting May while she lives.

Like all good Cavaliers she would give away the clothes off her back, if she thought you wanted them. Ruth saved the apple of Mrs. Mamble's eye for her; our landlady tried her best to present me with her precious willow plate when the ways came to the parting. She had so little, yet could give so much. When we replaced the overflowed china that our carelessness had decimated with a simpler pattern in plain blue band, Mrs. Mamble swallowed her disappointment and wept with delight over a design too sober for her colorful mind. She smiled her brightest when I broke her precious bowl and pitcher the day I collapsed with our baby's collapsible crib. Best of all, she gave us her whimsical self. She knew all the rich stuffs in the barest cottages of Iffley; she knew human nature as she knew mirth. She was for us a gateway into humble English life. She let us into the heart of England.

And so it comes that Ruth and I have vowed, and Hal vows,

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too, that if ever the roadways of life get too dark or seem too cheerless and bare, we are going back there to Ittleby; and we are going to hunt out Mrs. Mamble and make her live with us again. We will send Big Bill packing, and we will get a little house and have sunlight and candlelight in it, and Mrs. Mamble; and life will be as sweet as ever we found it when Mrs. Mamble was our landlady before and life was all youth and new babies, peace that comes with simplicity; and the roses of dawn blossomed in our tiny chamber in a time of singing birds.

The Paradox of Oxford

MANY people have written about the riddle of Oxford. To many serious academic minds it has been a mystery that this odd collection of separate colleges, without alumni organizations and without advertising, with antiquated prejudices and with Mediaeval buildings, should continue to be a power in the world of learning. To an outsider, and especially to an American, Oxford is a mess of paradoxes stirred together with a spoon. It is something as if one had a whole group of our small colleges in one town, each competing with all the others in scholarship and athletics, in general prestige. There *must* be a secret to this University.

Great scholarliness in a place of no plumbing to speak of! "Why should we install bathrooms?" a college head asked indignantly not so many years ago. "The young gentlemen are here only eight weeks at a time!" I remember my first college bath; the years turned back, and I saw again the look of injured dignity in the haughty eyes of a pet gander when the saucer he had chosen for his bath vanished under his feathers.

Dr. Johnson's college still uses candles. And Oxford flourishes on an endowment that would hardly keep the wolf from the door of a small American college. There are no campaigns launched to make "the sunset years" of the faculty secure. Yet men with fame in their names teach there while their hairs grow white and their names grow golden, and their books go around the world. Many a don on a salary of an American high school principal fills shelves of our university libraries with sound learning.

And there are more paradoxes than this of lean purses and rich scholarship. Some of these dons write books that children love, that men who come home with grime on their hands enjoy.

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Others give their names to the world on a new kind of pun. Some of them, authorities on the morphology of Homeric verbs, catch astounding fish or climb all manner of Alps. They put off gowns and play Homeric tennis. Bearded like the major prophets, book-laden and gowned, they pedal ahead of captains of crew and rugby. They do things well, the dons; they drink ale, they crawl under hedges, wear old clothes, eat strawberry jam and cheese with ditchers and diggers in village inns, and take nobody's backwash in talk of ferreting and poaching; they know how to play; they set down their learning so that it is pleasant to read; they know how to live.

Oxford is the home of such paradoxes. There are no "drives" for new equipment. Yet the old place grows, is full of the youth and promise of the best of England and the Colonies. No great alumni bodies with secretaries and reunions assist in keeping alive an Oxonian tradition. But the tradition is there, and the old men come swarming back to college cups and college boats from the underside of the earth, from India and Manitoba, from veldt and pampas. Poets write verses about Oxford; all her sons bring their renown home to her towers and green gardens.

There is no great cult of athletics, no great Diana of the Muscles before whom graduates prostrate themselves and gouge their purses. There are no professional coaches to say that games shall be work and not play, no gladiatorial schools hardening a handful of men for shows for the many. Yet teams of the dark blue set up world records and do glorious things in lands overseas.

The University is one without classrooms, without quizzes, without lectures if you wish; each college has its own tutors in subjects offered elsewhere; there is no close coöperation of departments as we have it; dons overlap and contradict one another; it is their glory. There is really no central office of infor-

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mation; the *Excerpta e Statutis*, written partly in the learned language of Chaucer's day, is like an essay in Mediaeval metaphysics or astrology. No advertising! I know an American professor who spent five years in getting the *Excerpta*, and another five in attempting to decipher it.

There is a library, the Bodleian, the best university library in the world; but you cannot take books out of it, you must spend days in getting admitted to it, it takes hours to have books found and fetched by irresponsible shavers who play marbles on the way; you must read by such light as filters through old glass covered with Virginia creeper. The home of priceless manuscripts, the "jewels of the learned," is unlighted, unheated, and it closes at four in the afternoon.

And so it goes everywhere. Colleges compete with public houses and supply the student with better ale and cheaper than he can get elsewhere. Students must rise each morning for chapel. Their windows are barred, and they may study or not as they please. They must wear gowns and pay a small fine for being let into college after nine at night; they can steeplechase and bet, they can hunt; they are bound by Mediaeval rules framed for Mediaeval boys who had just slipped maternal apron strings and put on paternal hose. It is no wonder that the newly matriculated man from overseas goes about with a smile on his face the first week. And yet that smile changes, grows into the smile of a believer, stays on his face for better or for worse to the end of his Oxford days, stays to sweeten all the days and the ways of his life. This unique and refreshing Oxonian pleasure, incredulous at first, becomes a creed for living, for finding the humor in all things, for the gospel and glory of old age.

There is a riddle to Oxford. But it is simple of solution. It is nothing more mysterious than this: here is a university that teaches life, the life each undergraduate is going to live. Other

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universities give one setting-up drills, preparation for life; others teach departments of life, athletics, teaching, business, religion; but all as *specialties*. Say what one may, there is a Puritanic intensity to all that most American undergraduates do. Hence most American colleges are treadmills; in them one goes through the steps that will give training in the one set of interests of one's choosing, be they athletic or intellectual. We go in for football or Greek poetry. In rare instances for both; but always *separately*. We do not combine the two. One has the Puritan's feeling of the sanctity and aloofness of the affair at hand from all that is easy and pleasant and comfortable and decorative. And so we often miss the liberal and the magic of proportion and vitality; and, missing these, miss life. For life seems to be a mixed matter: geraniums and gerunds, pancakes and the talk of friends. We scrimmage or we scan; and with our whole souls. A sense of the artistic or the historical is as much out of place on the football field as a joviality such as only a rare sense of the physical can give is out of place among dead participles. Either way we strain and contort and narrow ourselves, go into a sort of Mediaeval absorption in the thing contemplated; the green beauty of trees and blue loveliness of sky or the red pulse of life we lose from our beings along this *Via Negativa*. On the playing fields our books are sealed to us; among our books the kingliness of bodily well-being is an unbidden guest. And Liberality sits widowed by.

Now obviously people must exercise, even though they are business magnates or professors; and people must read and think after the hours of bricklaying. Every man must be able to get the fullest pleasure possible out of all he does. Colleges ought to teach him so to do. Oxford does teach a man this. Whatever else the University might teach, she schools him in the way best to enjoy himself, here and now, while the bloom of his prime is still upon him. If a boy cannot feel the pulses of a book beat when his own

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are all April and morning, his books will always be mummies. If a young oarsman cannot feel the rhythm that all the poets have found singing in their hearts and the glory that all kingly minds have worn, then his exercise in age will be a cheating of the grave and not a daily poetry.

Youthful impressions go deepest; if the young can rub elbows with all sorts of pleasant things, academic and unacademic, if they can learn to live just as they would like to live right up to the sunset, as they will live if they are wise, then the race is won at the start. The young Oxonian tastes the pleasant, varied things in store for him beyond the University. On matriculation he is put squarely on the two feet that are to bear him to the end. He can work or play; or he can find the golden mean in all things.

So much, in theory at least, the liberty of the Oxford system allows him, this system without classroom exercises, periodic examinations, or close scrutiny of his academic progress. Actually, however, he is guided on every side by the example of older students and dons, men who have caught the magic of Oxford and who are making life seem a thing of great ease and gracefulness. There is about Oxford, as about so many of the older English things, something Chaucerian, something of the grace of the Cavalier. Perhaps our fathers left our racial aptitude for lightness and joviality behind them with the easier life and surroundings when they spread out their Puritan canvas to the west. Certainly, we take our genealogies, our sports, our wars, and our learning much more seriously than the English take theirs.

The very setting of Oxford is a paradox, the paradox of life. Pigs would be out of place on most American campuses; they are always about your feet in Oxford; they gather especially about the steps of the Bodleian. Lean cows and sheep, too, are always under your windows. The whole soils of Berkshire and rich Ox-

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fordshire move into the City of Towers once a week on market days. You can read Homer with Homer's men and Homer's beasts beside you; a sheep drover may turn out another Nestor when you get him into conversation.

The simplicities of life, the holy miracle of daily bread, the stark kingliness of poverty, the wealth of simple faith and belief,—these you can learn from unspoiled children of field and furrow right in the shadow of St. Mary's. The cabmen alone are as good as *Rabelais* for your education. You can look up from living books and see living men of all picturesque sorts around you. Besides, outside the City are a hundred villages where rich courses in uncommercialized human nature can be had for the walking. Great men of the cottages, "village-Hampdens," can join the great men of the colleges in teaching you that life is a breathless beauty, that the commonest things and the simplest are the brass and bronze that time cannot move.

Then the undergraduates can prove to you that life is a pleasant variety of things. They can help you to find yourself by showing how graceful it is, not to be exercising for life that is to come, but to be actually living it. The young politicians of the Union Debating Society can prove it to you in their very momentous meetings in which M. P.'s and ex-Prime Ministers are met and conquered in the flesh, meetings that London newspapers gravely report; not still-life debates, not preliminary lessons in politics, but the actual thing; and withal garnished with such fluency, ease, and grace that visiting debating teams with Puritanic stores of facts and transatlantic seriousness have been utterly at sea.

The scholars of the University can instruct one in the Greek tenet of the golden mean, too. They go out every afternoon, all of them, just as they will do all of their lives, not because they are being loyal to their college or because they wish to win from Cambridge, but simply because they like to play games, and simply

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because the games they play are, not prayerful exercises in Spartan discipline or grimly weeded-out drills for the very expert, but pleasant and sociable affairs for even the inexpert into which tea can and does intrude always at the stroke of five,—tea for which the British Tommy was well-nigh ready to stop the late War,—tea that nearly disrupted one disgruntled American regiment I know of, newly arrived into the paradox of English life at old Winchester. All boys like to play; they are boys for good and all, even when their beards will be gray; so they play their games. So runs the paradox of the scholars.

The athletes offer their paradox in turn. They are men who can usually write astonishingly well and who like books so well that their minds are full of the figures of speech and rhetorical and humane ornamentation of great ideas even when they chase a football. I once heard a prince of rugby players recite quite apropos a line of Virgil after a hard tackle had smeared him with mud. No one ridiculed him. I think some one went him one better and quoted Homer. At any rate, Oxford poets, who write, not about life and death and love only, but about things they know more intimately, puddings and jam and dons, have a knack for giving literary grace to their lighter verse by the use of literary and learned figures and allusions. They mix their port and Plato, hexameter and scrimmage. After all, Shakespeare did that sort of thing. It is the way things run in life.

Find me a single college in America where the athlete who wins his college letter and the student who makes Phi Beta Kappa are regarded *by their fellow students* as men of equal merit, and you have found the Oxonian idea. But I am confident there is not one such college in our country. The "blue" and the "first" at Oxford are absolutely as great in the undergraduate estimation. In fact, it is hard to tell them apart; for the "blue" is usually a scholarly man, and the "first" is probably an excellent man with

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an oar or bat. They mix the good things of life well. They like their books so well and they feel their games so keenly that they cannot keep the two apart. They are there to teach one how to get the best sort of education, the old Athenian sort, the best in good taste and great ideas and the best in sport for the glory of the sport.

But, best of all, there are the dons. It would be a strange sight in America to see a graybeard in running "shorts" pursuing a college boat and pushing people into the river as he ran, shouting and shooting a revolver likely; it would be doubly strange if that venerable runner were a professor of Latin. It is no uncommon sight at Oxford. Or a college dean, perhaps, pouring out port for one. What is there wrong about it? Why is it wrong to mix two zestful matters? I know a vice-chancellor of Oxford who, in a tall and respectable hat which one had to rescue from under the very wheels of a 'bus, led one through ploughland and thorn to show one a Mediaeval carving in a village church, a carving in which a bagpipe player piped and a listener held hands to his ears in self defence. Double symbolism. . . . And to crown it all the august man led his undergraduate, on a short cut, straight into the quicksand of a barnyard.

Why should a vice-chancellor keep his pedestal always? It is not fair to his university for him to do so. Oxford tutors like the picturesque in quaint and simple ways and men. November wheat-fields are golden things, so are young men, likewise the learned. It is impossible to disentangle the threads of gold that make up the fabric of Oxford. The old are so young and the young so venerable in the wisdom of doing things wholeheartedly that age or station in life ceases to matter. And that, after all, is what most human beings are after.

Why should one make education a matter of a hermit's cell, a bitter, a hard exercise, or even a compartment of life? Education

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cannot be better than the thing it is after, and living is a whole affair. Red-blooded, good earthy things ought not to be ill at ease in company with the best things of the mind. Pindar ought not to put out pudding. He does not at Oxford. There is no reason why aristocracy, good clothes, and good living are not best for right thinking. Oxford, since the day of Laud the most aristocratic of universities, has proved it. There is no reason why the glory of the mind should not go hand in hand with the glory of the body. So the Oxonian man of books plays games. There is no reason why learning should be uncomfortable, or should make a hedgehog of a man, or a pedant, or a dry statistician. Again Oxford proves it.

There is no justification for getting shut off by one's education from one's fellows, from one's sympathy with the lusty, grimy book of human nature that is a mender of roads. At Oxford one reads him, with other books. There is no call for learning to shut one away from other beauties in field flowers, in trees, in animals, from dawn and stars. There is no reason why learning should not make of you a richer man, a better father of a family, a playmate of boys, a lover of games, a greater lover of youth, of the old hills and the new babies, of talking and smoking, of wine and books and walks, of all things good and sweet and fair.

Christmas in North Wales

THERE had been the early morning service at the little English chapel. The candles had been really needed, and the cold little place had been full of stars while Luke was being read. The tale of shepherds, and outside the church sheep were bleating as they nuzzled for the grass under the snow. The wind in the cracked reeds of the old organ died away into the mighty music of God's great winds playing upon the reeds of the Welsh mountains. We went out into an opal mountain morning; all the snows of overhanging peaks were rose above the twilight of the glens. The frost hung in long fringes on everything; even the stones were cushions of glittering pins. The hedges were feathered with the plumage of white where the birds of the frost had flown. The first long beam of the sun came down to us over the shoulder of Moel Siabod along a pathway too splendid with diamond and crystal to look at. And we met the shepherds who have not changed since that night above Bethlehem driving their flocks along the crooked lane as we went back to our inn.

All the day kept the mood. Winds shod with glittering snow dust trampled the mountains. Thickets of glistening holly dark green on the white. There had been rabbit shooting in the heather that crackled underfoot. The wind was a cold great pillow to lean on. Flurries of snow that seemed to come up out of the valleys whirled in our faces as we walked the high ridges of the hills. Brilliant rivers of sunlight poured down the mountains; one could almost hear the far thunder of their shining waters. Snow and sun and snow again, with the everlasting plaint of sheep wandering unseen. The sun went down at last into a majestic couch of clouds. The mountains closed in upon us till the burning brows of them were bent right over our heads; one could have reached up

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and touched them. Only they were too fair to soil. Then, as we threaded the blue shadows of the snowy ravines, the stars began to kindle in the wind. The mountains sank back into their places with long sighs we could hear. Right at the tips of our toes little cottage lamps, inconceivably far down, marked out the deep fastnesses of home. Our breath was like plumes about our heads, and our shoes creaked as we hurried down the dark trail; the little stars in the valley grew and came up towards us, while the nearer stars overhead sputtered and faded.

The lights in the inn that night were all candles. White and aloof they looked as the mountains that had been in our eyes all day. Things had a soft radiance one had not noticed before to-night. A pewter plate made one think of a painted hobby horse many snows ago. Light and her kinsman Warmth ministered healing. Our bodies vibrated with strings; the firelight in the grate was a carol itself. Snatches of laughter were like echoes from the past. The evening was a presence one was sure of, a guest with quiet eyes, smiling with bowed head into the fire.

The three Brights, sister and brothers, our innkeepers, dined us proudly. That night there was a feast of an English Christmas under the candles and the greenery. These Brights knew how to live through every day in the year, being English folk of gentle blood. But they overflowed at this season. Once they had known better days; but that was before their father took his stables of polo ponies to India and lost the family fortune. . . . When the evil days came, being of gentle blood, his children could not abide in the England and among the friends they loved. So they had crept away out of sight into the innermost heart of the Welsh mountains. Here they could descend to innkeeping and keep their pride. And their inn was like the great house their ancestors and they had kept. One was a guest and a friend, not a lodger. So the sister presided at the head of the table, and a brother sat midway

Christmas in North Wales

the board on either side, big blooming men as only Englishmen can be. Big in mind as in body, frank, open, hearty as the winds and the mountains that had befriended them. Days of shooting and fishing had made the wind-roses of clear blood blossom on their faces. Laughter was on them like a gale. Like Arthur in his Court in the Green Knight's time and the season of Christmas, they had the mirth of the child's manner in their tumultuous blood, and like Arthur they would not begin the feasting until some antick story or marvel had been told. So it was a tale of Welsh witchcraft the hostess told us, a tale of the old shepherd who would not leave his sheep, who lives on in the mountains through the ages in wild ram after ram.

Then we turned boisterously to the roasted goose. It was a true bird of the Yuletide, the brown richness of the meat crackled to the knife. I have no memory of all the courses. There was a perfect pageant of them. But I remember the port, which was red as old church windows in the candlelight and filled the heart with far off summers. Another drink shed color of deepest amber on the cloth. And there was a trifle—inadequate word!—that was all witchcraft, whipped cream and sherry, fruits of the Hesperides, and crumbly cake that melted i' the mouth. Last to come, when all was red and green mirth and the candles were guttering silver streams on the cloth, was a plum pudding out of an older time. It was round and brown and sprigged with holly and swam in flames of brandy. It was the crown of the feast. Citron and suet, I shall taste them to the shadowtime of my day.

Afterwards there were seats before the chimney, tales, and all the old songs of Christmas, with the dance going on between. There were games one half remembered from some other, dreamt-of childhood. Some artist of the craft brewed a punch in a great bowl. It gathered up all the spices and the savors of the earth and kindled a firelight in the brain. Through the shadows and

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lights the evergreens of life wound us together in a maze of good-fellowship,

“Loud was the cry there of clerks and others. Noel was celebrated anew, shouted full often; and afterwards the great ones ran about to take handsel.”

Through the open doorway into the taproom we heard the Welsh shepherds singing their carols. In their ancient circles they sat at the tables, and each made up his part as he sang, put his soul that had ripened under the lonely, bright stars into the cadences of wistful minor chords. Their voices wove a tapestry of winds and the darkness, lanterns and the stable sounds and the cry of a little child; they sang with their kinsmen of Bethlehem that night. Their carols gave benediction to the evening. . . . A taste of tears to savor the starry silences before the deep sleep of that night, under the shadow of the mountains.



Sundown, Afon Lledr, North Wales.

Of Bags

IF you should ask some foreigner or a Cambridge man what the official badge of Oxford University is, you would be told that it is a shield with a book and tripled crowns *or* on a field *azur*, with six things behind it that look like sugar shakers, and a cap-of-liberty sort of headgear as crest for it all. But you ought to know better than ask such a person. If you ask an Oxonian, don or undergraduate, he will answer at once, "Bags."

Now there are bags and bags, Boston, carpet, kit, and pudding; a dictionary cannot help you here. But an anecdote of Oxon may best define our word. It appears that a rather venerable don, done with his books for the term, was going down by train to London. He was alone in his compartment; or, rather, he had thought so at the beginning of his journey. But to his sorrow he learned that ants had nested under the plush of his cushion. The knowledge came gradually to him, but poignantly notwithstanding. He did everything, this don, when he knew the worst, to part company with these insect intruders upon his peace. He shed his shoes, he took off his coat and vest, he shed his socks; he shook himself as he had not done in years. Still he was not free of them. Last of all to go werè his bags. . . . He shook them out of the window; when, as some deity of a Thomas Hardian sort decreed, a miserable tree or shrub growing close to the steel highway wrenched them from his grasp. . . . I will not say more of the mental sufferings of the man for the rest of the journey. But, as the same Hardian deity willed, it chanced that as the train entered the metropolis a vendor of the American sort of bags went along the corridor advertising his wares loudly—"Bags! bags! bags!" It was then that the ladies and gentlemen of the impatient type, who were already in the corridor against the moment of

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arrival, saw a venerable and very desperate don rush bagless forth crying to heaven that bags were the one commodity on earth that he most ardently yearned for.

What cataclysm was it that first made Oxonians swathe their legs in these shapeless draperies of gray wool? For gray they must be, and above all shapeless. It is one of the unwritten laws of the University that all lads of learning must go in trousers as innocent of a crease as the Bodleian of seats for undergraduates. As Cantabrigians must wear the mortarboard and not the gown, as Oxonians the gown and not the cap, so, too, bags are expected of all Oxonians. It is a thing as brass and bronze, this custom, as the law that all shoes must be mirrors polished anew each day. It is rather startling to Americans to find this reversal of the cart and the horse, for we spend our care above and leave off, generally, at the tops of our shoes. It is always an event when the first crop of Americans arrives in Oxford each autumn: Oxonians turn out *en masse* to marvel at the debonair lines of transatlantic trousers. But the pageant is soon past. In a week or so all the fine limbs of the newcomers vanish in the voluminous folds of Oxford gray flannels, so aptly described by Pierre Loti when he was writing of his favorite clouds with his best adjectives—*vagues, immenses, mystérieux!* And if anything the flannels of the new arrivals are more shapeless, as the tweed coats that complete the costume are the shaggier and the more inclined to violence in green plaids.

Whence bags? The subject should be approached historically. It is the best way with venerable institutions. Was it the Great Frost of 1686 that brought them into being? That theory, I feel confident, was first advanced by Cantabs. They were jealous of the greater antiquity of Oxford and so were anxious to cast every possible doubt upon a place where most institutions can be traced back to the Trojans, who settled here and built a noble seat of

Of Bags

learning when Cambridge was a fenland haunted by Gogmagog. But did the Trojans wear trousers? why is Virgil silent upon this topic? In coming north, though, who can say what the resourceful Trojans may not have invented in the way of protection from the cold? We must dismiss, too, the theory that it was the hordes of Pictish men from the north, who poured into Oxford and established Balliol in the Middle Ages, that brought bags with them, along with a lust for prizes and prize essays. Tempting as that theory may be, it will hardly hold water. Perhaps, after all, it is better to leave their origin mercifully to the mists of the past.

It is enough that bags are firmly established on the persons of all those who have consecrated themselves to learning in the ancient town at the confluence of the Isis and the Cher. Year by year the fashions of the world change; hats wax and wane; coats contract and flare. But the shapeless bags go on being shapeless unto the third and fourth generation of them that wear them. They even usurp the place of knickers in biking, of their white cousins on the tennis lawn. His Royal Goodfellowliness, the "Pragger Wagger," as the Prince of Wales is spelled in Oxonian patois, broke a sacred precedent as an undergraduate and played tennis in bags; the University was quick to follow suit. How can these things pass away, when they make friends of the kings?

As one goes with something like the stamp of University approval upon one when one goes properly bagged, so it is that one has something of the brand of University disapproval on his body when one is debagged. For it is necessary to set down the sad fact that bags may not be worn by certain Oxford men on certain occasions. The repeated use of an umbrella to cover one's head from the frequent rain is a cause for debagging. Another is the persistent refusal of an undergraduate to make friends within

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his own college. Men have lost their bags temporarily, too, for studying through a college bonfire, for using only Antipodean speech at dinner in hall, for refusing to share their tobacco, for being hedgehogs generally. The process of debagging is usually swift, and the offender against custom is very often assisted by the college in a body in removing the symbols of University approval from his legs. It often happens, therefore, that the ceremony is a semi-public one. In case debagging has not in itself been sufficient to remedy matters, college fountains have sometimes been used as further correctives.

But the righteous Oxonian goes bagged and breakfasted to the end of his career.

Iffley the Unspoiled

THERE are two ways of reaching Iffley from Oxford, the one by the London road and the other along the river. If the 'bus be your choice, you have a moment from the lives of old kings while past your high throne on either hand passes the pageant of the finest street in the world, with college towers and gables on which carven lions are proud to hold their gonfalons, gateways into quadrangles unbelievably green and secluded, casements from which gownsmen bent the yebow upon townsmen of Chaucer's day, the spire of St. Mary's going up full of serene beauty as the lives of Mediaeval saints, whose dream it is come true in stone. Then, where Magadalen Tower closes the eastern gate of the City with white loveliness, you pass out of the Enchanted City into regular rows of red brick horror. You are in modern villadom where every form of bad taste in houses flaunts names like *Ivydene*, *Avalon*, or *Cypress Villa*. You have passed from kings to cabbages—literally, too, for after a mile of villas cabbages do replace brick and stone, cabbages in every blowsy sort of negligée and of every hue, especially that peculiar purple species seen so often in English Wartime allotment plots, so vividly fascinating to the outlander yet so fruitful of regrets when eaten. Kindly hedgerows are too low to hide from him who rides on the hurricane deck of the 'bus the purple nightmare of vegetable plots. They line the road right up to the by-way that slips off unobtrusively into Iffley and lets the motors roar along Londonwards. It is not the right way to reach the Village Unspoiled.

You should take the river path. Here you have your sordidness over and done with at the beginning. You go through the ugliness of lower St. Ods, redolent of kippers at bargain prices and

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of long loneliness for the sea and of other fish the age of which is better left to merciful oblivion. Having threaded your way through pigs all the way from Christ Church, you leave the City by the Bridge called Folly, probably by stout oxters who scorned the refinement of a bridge over a ford which their fathers before them had been men enough to wade. The boatmen that swarm here like Algerian pirates scenting possible pence have not changed since the time when the melancholy author of the *Anatomy of Melancholy* is said to have taken his only joy in life in hearing them swear. Quitting the Bridge where Friar Bacon kept his house over the water and dreamt untimely dreams of automobiles, histology, and the scientific method, one turns aside down the river towpath. The way lies between the battleground of the February and May boats and lush meadows with haycocks and cows knee-deep in sweetness. In any season the water is apt to be eloquent with oarblades and the path with the Homeric irony of bicycling coaches who take no thought at all for pedestrians but fly between wind and water with eyes and voice all upon the boats they pace. There will be the inevitable fishermen to line the river bank all the way; they might well serve as models for "patience on a monument" save for the fact that their noses are perpetually red and their trousers perpetually patched. I have heard people swear that they have seen these men land fish; but I am still unconvinced. I think that such people are bent on destroying the last remnants of the Golden Age. Fishing, not fish, is the passion of these waterside philosophers of the Iffley Track. On the right hand are the meadows where Arnold's Scholar-Gypsy must have gathered those rare orchids, the fritillaries that he dangled on "the stripling Thames" at Bablock Hithe, for they grow only in this Meadow of the Seven Candles. This place of cows and sweet grass fragrances below the hills that Arnold and his Gypsy loved gets its name from a pious incident in the

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childhood of Oxford. It seems the Norman master of the City, Robert D'Oyley, fell afoul of the claims of the monks of older Abingdon to this grazing land between the two branches of the Thames. A trial was made and the settlement rested on the knees of God. Seven lighted candles were put upon a raft woven of osiers; the boat of light was set adrift. Those coasts it should touch were to belong to Holy Church; those it should eschew, to Robert and his heirs forever. Piety had its reward, for the boat of tapers went, even against the currents of the river then at flood, touching all on every hand for the Church. In the midst of the Meadow of Candles one comes to the watergate of Iffley and passes under the green and brown gloom of willows, where silver mayflies are dancing away their day's immortality, and so over the river by bridge with the easeful sound of falling waters turning the day to music in one's ears.

Rivers crossed in England mean halfpennies. One has the consolation of goodly English precedent behind the claw-like hand that reaches forth from the tiny toll-house to take the halfpenny which is the price of entering Iffley the ideal way; when workmen were repairing the bridge some years ago, they found Roman *denarii*, together with Saxon coins, on the river bottom beneath the bridge. Hard by the toll-house are the ruins of the mill that had ground a century of grists in Chaucer's time and that ground on down to a decade ago when fire took it. Now, only the broken paddles of the great mossy waterwheel and an idle millstone mark the site of the Iffley Mill.

Up a steepish hill on cobbles elliptical, all pointing one way, and under an avenue of lime trees trained to grow like candelabra the lane winds under high walls overgrown with ivy, and one comes to a gate beneath a chestnut tree; one is in the heart of Iffley. Here is one of the hundred churchyards within footing distance of Oxford where one may live Gray's *Elegy*. The Iffley

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Church is Norman and is as old as the days when there were as many spellings of Iffley as there were villagers, as old as the singing monks sailing by downstream to Abingdon. It has the lichens and the love of eight hundred years built into its low walls rising from the green benediction of graves. It must be easy and pleasant to sleep here, with the earliest come snowdrops and crocuses starring the turf, and roses at the floodtide of the year. The Church is older even than the great yew that half covers the graves, the oldest yew tree in England good Iffleyites declare, as good English villagers declare of their yews in every village in England. And with its half-effaced zigzag-bordered arches set with beaks of queer birds from Mediaeval bestiaries which bite and vex their own wings and tails to prove their ancient lineage, the Church is as lovely as it is old. The wide tower and the round-topped windows are full of the naïve frankness of folk who have found out the holiness of simplicity. The sunlight comes purely through its plain windows and carpets the floor with the same patterns that made beautiful the feet which rest these centuries under the green outside. All the honest and humble prayers of the devout of many years seem to sweeten the white walls. One thinks of the long sunbeams of many children's hair reaching back unbroken from today at the ancient carven font into the yesterdays. Here are holy things that time cannot touch, the truce of God, faith in gold and gray, precepts of happiness, precepts of peace.

It is but a step from the Churchyard through an oak door let into a crumbling wall to the Rectory. The rambling building was in other days a refectory of Abingdon monks. A goodly part of it bears its seven centuries beautifully and felicitously on eaves hung green with moss and tiles that show every kindly shade of red and gray. There is no better place to read the Church Fathers than the Rector's oaken-panelled study, with bees making



Berrynarbor Church, North Devon.

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the afternoon golden about the pleached pear trees on the wall outside and the blue of English skies that makes one think of forget-me-nots, all invitation to one's gaze through leaded casements opened wide. Chrysostom and the afternoon sunlight of summer, Ambrose and the scent of honey. Men with gold and honey in their names are at home here; and the windows open on some place very like the New Jerusalem. Indeed, below is the great drawing room with a gold and blue motto for a border promising

MANIBUS NON FACTAM DOMUM SEMPITERNAM IN COELIS.

And there is the Rector's wife, whose dearly cherished Infant Dionysius of too clean marble cannot destroy the atmosphere of ages, pouring the Rectory dog his milk and saying over tea things the happy things a rector's wife finds to say. And Audrey, the sporting daughter of the house, the ruddiness of long afternoons with October beagles on her face, is tapping the panels to show you just where the secret passage is, for secret passage such a house must have, and perhaps dislodging a pet watercolor of Venice or a Dresden shepherdess in her exuberant enthusiasm. Winding passages, steps up and down, odd windows everywhere, stairs down which a friar may walk, and the Rector with his puns to take you back with him through the years of his house. But outside in the Rectory gardens is the heart of England. The sanctity of an enclosure had never so sweet a demonstration. There is a mulberry, and peach trees that stand English fashion, to get the ripening heat of the bricks, like candelabra against walls, Virginia creeper to tell the passing of the year in red, ivy to keep the year immortally green; and beyond the antique sundial set mossily in the miracle of velvet lawn seven terraces go down with urns and rose arbors to the swallow-haunted Thames. Best of all, there is a cosy quiet, sounds of Village dogs and louder

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Village boys faint and musical beyond high walls, tea and talk, talk and tea, and the day's shadows growing longer on the grass. If a man is ever going to be a poet, it is in such a place.

But one cannot play the hermit forever. Beyond, above the Churchyard and the Village, the hill rises on which Hawthorne, come three thousand miles to love Oxford, found his view of the City that turns white with all her towers in the sunshine, a view that makes Arnold's from Hinksey Hill a thing of paleness. If you should follow certain wildgrown hedges of blackthorn and white along this hill on a way that I know of but will never tell you for fear the secret would get to Iffley boys, you would come upon glades in thickets where grow such February primroses as in no other spot in England and where May comes with miles of bluebells until they look like smoke under the trees. But you shall turn instead into the long Village street by Postmistress Blay's neat little cottage. Mistress Blay, spinster, is keeper of the mails and the lone telephone that thrusts but this one meddlesome finger of a rushing age into the quiet of this place; the watchful gods of Iffley have seen to it that this one digit is palsied, for it is better to put your trust in leather soles than in the local telephone, perpetually out of order. The Postmistress could put the most old-fashioned of New England housewives to shame in her house; her arms, *argent*, a scrubbing brush, *or*, *rampant*, and of bands or chevrons, *sable*, none at all. I honestly believe she scrubs the stamps. One could eat off her hearthstones and make a mirror of her copper kettle.

Perhaps, across the street little girls all in pinafores and martyred hair and those young animals, the boys with apple cheeks, smooched Eton collars, and sturdy bare knees will be filing into the Village Schoolhouse by their separate doors. If so, one needs to watch the boys out of the corner of the eye, for, in spite of their touching their forelocks to you, they may let fly

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their horse-chestnuts, veterans of many an encounter with other chestnuts swung on strings; the arrows of the Parthians were blown chaff to these. And they have their scholastic citadel into which to withdraw. Under the thatch of the Schoolhouse there is more to learning than numbers and knitting for the boys, numbers and plain sewing for the girls; there are dishes that mean school teas and treats and a floor easily cleared for games and the dance. Our old favorite *Going to Jerusalem* appears as *Musical Chairs*, *Spin the Platter* as *Turn the Trencher*. May Day and Christmas set forth in fine style from this base; the one with flower wreaths that attendants bear before the May King and Queen, who have all the morning on their faces, or at least as much of it as soap can put there, the other with horn lanterns and old sweet carols to sing from house to house in the cold starlight of Christmas eve.

Near at hand the Milkman lives in the calm past, though trafficking in the present. His stoop has the seashell which hides the key just as in New England villages; his parlor table is a shrine whereon rest his Sunday-go-to-meeting hat and his prayer-book wrapped carefully in a spotless handkerchief. His delivery man, an ungainly boy in teens, who brings you the buttercups and marigolds of Iffley meadows mistakenly called cream, is a poor Hermes to this Zeus. In the Village phrase he is "eleven pence, three farthings," which means in our speech not wholly there. He is quite apt to leave the crock he has filled just where you will upset it when you open the garden gate. If your Christmas box to him hold a sermon upon his carelessness, then he is likely to call nature to his aid in his malevolence and fill up your measure without first emptying the rainwater from the pitcher. But the Milkman is greater than his servant; he keeps his house quietly against the years and lives in his clouds.

In the midst of houses occupied by families who can call them-

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selves "county" a thatched cottage overgrown with roses and smelling to the skies of sweet lavender is the most delightful of all. Lombardy poplars keep the sky well brushed above, and there is the plumpest and rosiest of babies, as only English boy babies can be, to look at one starry-eyed through crooked casements and to make the day complete with his play among short-stemmed, dainty daisies on the lawn. Bees have made the golden and chocolate thatching their hive; window geraniums know how to grow best there . . . a place near to the heart of things that matter in this world.

The houses of the Village "quality" are pleasant places, too. The *Malt House* was once a real malt house; shaven tonsures bent over the mash in this monkish brewery to watch it change into the ale of beatitude. That was in the time when many good earthly things were still under the wings of the Church, things good to eat and drink, food for holy songs. The gardens of the house have their ruins of the ancient brewing place; stone figures in mitre and sanctified attitude are scattered among today's brussels sprouts. One wishes to be allowed to dig in the bed of violas for relics. *Rivermead* is Elizabethan and rambling. Unexpected levels dropping or rising one room to the next, carven griffins on the doors, a stairway down from the street into the main rooms that run over into the gardens, and gardens that invade the rooms. And the river alone at the foot of it all to keep the garden from going on straight to the City Delectable. In the house a retired bishop enjoys his peaceful valedictory days, after the ragged clouds and mists of Newfoundland years. Death can come sweetly to him here, and when ears fail there are roses, and when eyes, the feel of them and the smell of their fallen petals. In the "fourth gentleman's house on the left," to let its delightful occupant describe it, the better part of the Victorian Age is entrenched. You have painted shells, scrapbooks, watercolors of

Iffley the Unspoiled

Sicilian ruins done in the technique of the bold wash school affected by all young ladies who, yesterday, as a part of their education cultivated the muses brush in hand. The chairs wear plush, of course, and are stuffed; carved grapes may crop out of chair-backs where least expected; inevitably there is that chair, not practicable, with gilt flutings, which reproduces a scollop of the sea. Doilies are thick as cobwebs on morning grass. Books and a bookish reserve have filled the rooms with a charm well-nigh tangible. The politeness that meant a larger part of life thirty or forty years ago becomes the lady of this house exceedingly. Billy, the unkempt terrier, pitches his barking low, as Victorian dogs should do.

Besides the Schoolhouse, there are two other rallying places for the Villagers, the *Tree Inn* and the *Memorial Institute*. The *Tree* has gardens with tables spread under chestnut boughs at which Sunday-splendid workingmen wet their thick moustaches in their ale, while their wives strive in vain to sort their offspring out of the general mass of struggling boyhood. On gala Sundays there is a band that draws working folk even from Oxford. Such days of foreign invasion, however, fortunately for the peace of the Village, are rare. One is depressed vaguely by Iffley Sundays; the good people have so good a time with their leisure that there is pathos in the quickening of their merrymaking as twilight comes on and the ways point back to the villas and Monday. The *Institute*, the Village Clubhouse, need not overawe one with its name; it is only a small cottage done over. But it is a perfect memorial to the men and youths in the late War who have gone westward forever to a place sweeter even than Iffley. Here their memory keeps green, not in a cold stone shaft, but in a house where home folks can play the games they loved to play and read the books they left unread. Whist "drives" bring the retired Colonel and the Postmistress together to clash with Lady John

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and the Village Butcher in the winter evenings, tennis on the Club courts in the long English twilights of spring. The girl who doles out toffee in the Village store besting the Rector's daughter on the tennis lawn—here are the seeds of democracy sown.

If one is seeking for his contentment a house to live in where years have done a kindly work, where the art that lives in humble hands has made of stone and plaster a home, one would do well to turn in at the sign of *Teas Provided* and lift the latch of Donnington Cottage. If there is balm in Gilead, this is Gilead. No artist could make more of artistic irregularities than time and a happy chance have made for this little house. If the fallible human be the essence of art, here is a masterpiece. The roof tiles are of every shape, the gables go up, the roof sags down, mortar has peeled away to show timbering of Shakespeare's time, cracks have crept down the walls, casemented windows droop under the weight of climbing roses, moss has taken possession of the drains, and the chimney pots lean over. There are nasturtiums trained above the doorway; the garden has run wild with unbridled roses and japonica. You can get your pot of tea and feast in the open. Inside on the hearth is a kitten sedate as one of the pharaohs of the best period and a copper kettle with a song quite its own. Old plates catch the glow of seacoal fire. Each crooked, cosy thing goes straight home to the heart. Upstairs in a room I know with windows full of dewy stars there is such sleep as we had when children. Worries slip away, with the world, in any room at all. But

NULLA ROSA SINE SPINA.

The thorn in this rose is the landlady, a widow woman of set ways who through years of living alone has evolved a code of etiquette in pots and pans that would baffle a Balkan diplomat. Each saucepan has its charter of rights; this must never be set

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directly over the flame, that is to be used only for water; this saucer is sacred to the kitten. Now, though dishes are essential things, one still could manage. But not if one happens to be a man. Having been disappointed once in the *genus* in the person of her husband, she has sworn herself to everlasting hatred for all the rest. So Donnington for the sins of man like Eden goes tenantless.

No self-respecting English village would be without its haunted house. In Iffley it is occupied by Bill Watts, who is, to quote the Village, "a proper poacher." Bill with his unlicensed lurcher dog has a fine to-do with the rabbits on a moonlit night, and Bill's ferrets go into queer holes for rats. In other ways Bill does not keep his rectitude after sunset; it is hinted that he could tell more of the missing pig belonging to Georgie Moore, a curate in a neighboring hamlet much given to things bucolic, than how its squeal used to sound from a distance. Yet with all his nocturnal habits Bill fears the spirits and is greatly afflicted by them on his own hearth. He will tell you how a ghost looks standing in a corner of a room, like frozen smoke, not doing anything, but just awfully there. What it wants among Bill's broken shards of domesticity is a mystery. Perhaps it has chosen his house for its situation at the end of a lonely lane where bats weave their threads of flight across late twilights and hoot-owls play at question and answer all through the night.

Other houses there are less transfigured by the metaphysical but no less inviting. The tall elms of one estate are haunted by night with nightingales; over its sweeping lawns of an evening larks go up into a *nunc dimittis* sky. Another is the home of all the hollyhocks and of red wallflowers. A woman and her daughter live there, too, who brew quite the best tea in the world, a tea that makes you want to say the kindest things, a tea that wreathes the evening with the perfect garlands of peace. They make their

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fireside a shrine for their friends, though those friends come from half the world away. Their hearth is the benediction for any golden day. Last of all there is *The Turn*, the big place where Sir George and Lady John with their acres keep out the evil *jinn* of modern suburbandom from Iffley. Lady John rides her wheel as though her seventy years were twenty, and the May has never left her cheeks. If there is any kindly thing done in Iffley, she has her hand in it; she is the Village Mother, first there with ointments for burns, last to leave the child with the aching tooth. Her hands are perpetually bearing comfort. If her taste in Old Masters may be questioned, her house is reproachlessly hung with the healing of herbs and charity. To hear Sir George, who is a don at Jesus, talking among the fragrant old books of his library is to have a university at its source. If there are any great minds in the last half century whom he has not known, they are to be pitied. He has been everywhere and done many things well. India and Ireland meet in his witty wisdom interrupted by his chuckling "eh! . . . eh!" He can tell equally well the story he unearthed in the shadow of the Himalayas of Abraham and the Parsee or the ending of his recent visit as a secret conciliatory emissary from Parliament to Belfast and how the Irish students, dyed-in-the-wool Sinn Feiners all, bade him godspeed with cries—"Come back soon, Sir George, and we will make you the next President of Ireland!" He would be a great philosopher if, as Dr. Johnson remarked, cheerfulness were not always breaking in.

It is the greatest charm of Iffley that here one can see old Dame Human Nature busily knitting her socks unhurried by the clanking machines of this age, unobscured by the mountains of inventions wherewith we have shut in our lives. Simple houses, simple lives. The quintessence of quaintness walks the streets. Picturesque personalities thrive. FitzClare whose life is divided between keeping the blight from his potatoes and taking care of

Iffley the Unspoiled

a mountain of a perambulator long outgrown by his daughter will dispute the right of way with a pramload of purchases from town, or, if pramless, will hold you from your ways with philippics well seasoned by profanity against a blightful weather. Kindly Miss Duke may buttonhole you when you are hastening to see what is the matter with the baked beans, a dish which you have transplanted three thousand miles overseas into Miss Graydon's kitchen; you must leave the beans on the high knees of the gods while you hear intimate details of the domestic life of royalty and near-royalty (she does not go below earls); when you have finally torn yourself away, it is probably only to find the Graydons sitting by the ruins of their beans. Miss Norris, who is High Church and speaks to no one except Sir George and the Rector, and to the latter stiffly for his liberalism's sake, goes her withering way through the big estate where she rents one of the smaller cottages with that spirited aloofness which New England has described as *head up, tail over the dashboard*.

Nowhere else are there such babies to see, babies of an Iffley character, sunnily optimistic even under gray skies, with faces like roses washed by June showers or the appleblossoms of Easter-tide. In Iffley one meets such colorful people as the long-bearded patriarch who carries great pails of water by a yoke over his shoulders, the man who is supposed to keep the street swept but who is always sitting at rare ease on the curb eating his Gargantuan hunk of cheese, and that philosopher in corduroys strapped below the knees whose bundle of faggots cannot cover the patchwork on his breeches beside which Joseph's coat of many colors is as vanity. The Wash Lady who "does for" Iffley is a philosopher, too; out of her experience with three husbands she can give you a nugget of golden wisdom for marital felicity, "if you leaves 'em, you loses 'em." Picturesque tramps knock at Iffley doors for hot water to make their tea. One Village girl lives the

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romantic characters she reads about ; today she stalks through the streets as a Russian countess created from cheesecloth, tomorrow she will be Red Riding Hood or one of the shepherdesses of Marie Antoinette. Chrysanthemums, yellow and brown, have an added beauty if you can have them from the big basket of such a vendor as the Iffley woman in spotless apron and shoes as long behind the ankle as in front of it. The Middle Ages go by in a Cowley Father in brown skullcap and robe corded at the waist, with ankles bare for humility. A curate in shovel hat is less artistic, for he has his socks flapping down over his shoes. Hunting traditions go past in Miss Northam clear-eyed from the winds that whistle through a horse's mane, lithe with the grace of the prince of sports. "Bubbles," her dog, is pure faithfulness on four short legs. Human nature unadulterated is furnished by the Village Baker, temperamental to the core. He is a man to whom the symmetry of a loaf is music. He makes music, too, with his bold bass in the choir. But he shares the weakness of all artists ; he will punish you for buying a single loaf in town by letting you and your tea guests go breadless, and no loaf will crown your doorstep for days, until it so be you are chastened ; he will come out of the choir stall to sing his solo where all may see, even though he have but two bars to his share.

Old things keep green in Iffley, old customs, old hearts. The years go by along the London road, but miss the turn to the Village. One can walk its middle ways without fear of motors. The carol singers still lead the Christmas in ; December nights have lanterns with frosty aureoles, and the clear, distant songs, *Nowell* and *God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen*. Boy mummers gather pennies from house to house on Twelfth Night, armed with laths for swords, playing an Oxfordshire Saint George to a dragon of very broad Oxfordshire brogue. People pluck their forelock to Lady John and address her as *My Lady* ; they would

Iffley the Unspoiled

resent being told that such an act betokened servility. Plodding workmen one and all bid you *good-night* when they meet you on lanes full of dusk. And old men and women do not creep away to hide in houses there. They ride their wheels and play astounding tennis, laugh and walk abroad for ale and primroses, for the sunshine they may find and the rain in their faces, for the fountains of youth. Like babies, old folks flourish there.

It is good to live in Iffley. Somehow, unconsciously, people there seem to have learned the art of living. Tending their roses, living just as they please behind their high garden walls, having their hearts open to their open fires, getting the singing of their tea-kettles into their souls, somehow, they have learned the art. And the beauty and ease of it are everywhere. Old houses long filled with tears and laughter to live in, old chairs long hallowed with use by little children, old stones hung with ivy to love, these help to give felicity. But the greatest of all their blessedness is simplicity. They have found out that the deepest and the sweetest things are the little beauties of every day, porridge in bowls ringed with blue lines, baby shoes worn over at the heel, sunlight and firelight on dishes, smiles, and voices speaking low. The luxuries of life and the unessentials do not greatly trouble their still lives. The simple, single things that last they have, not motor cars, not phonographs, not telephones, not cinemas, not electricity; but in their homes you will find plain pity and love and grief and mercy and, best of all, kindness. So they are able to talk of happy things; so they can walk along their fields and share the joy the skylarks feel, see the way Spring treads, love sunset, and after that the stars. So they can play their croquet till every daisy of their hopes closes gladly with the dusk, and ride their bicycles right up to the green edge of the grave.

The "Britter"

ONE of the towers of Oxenford has fallen. It went down at a time when so many other buildings were falling across the world, in the days right after the War. Its going will leave a wistful space for all Oxonians on the skyline of the City of Spires.

It was a philosopher that fell, and one of the kinsmen of Diogenes. He linked our hands with the hands of the ancient Greeks. His very clothes, like the tatters of Diogenes, were the banners of his philosophy. I think he must have been a blood brother of another man of wisdom who haunts still the green places of my American *Alma Mater*. This Bowdoin philosopher I recall, in his Prince Albert green with the suns of many seasons, sitting in rapt worship in the old Church while the young Commencement philosophers spoke their proud words of wisdom just before going out into the world they would save. He, too, knew that the well of wisdom must be near the fountains of youth, as Socrates, as Plato knew it. So he merely existed in his little one-room shanty in a piney wasteland, existed on the wormy turnips and dwarfed potatoes of his hungry half acre. He lived only in the golden hours when he was a silent communicant with young men warmed to a festive oratory. He did not teach, as did his Grecian predecessors; he had learned the wisdom of merely listening to youth.

But the "Britter" was no silent philosopher, though he renewed his youth like the phoenix, among the young men of Oxon. His voice was lifted like a trumpet on occasion to sing his message to the world. His name, translated out of the Oxonian accordion dialect that makes such havoc of the vowels in Martyrs' Memorial as "Maggers' Memugger," stood for the British Work-

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ingman. That was his title; it was his pride. He believed in the divinity of those hardy Englishmen of the laboring class who hew out their destiny and shape the New, rough-hewn, Jerusalem. In the workingman he saw the salt of the earth and the lamp for the nations, the mother-of-pearl of all poetry, and the proof of man's immortality. The unwashed, full-blooded man of two fists, the man of the shovel and the axe, was a new Prometheus, climbing heavenwards to beard God and win flame. There was a lot of Walt Whitman in the "Britter." In his own person he symbolized the darling of his philosophy, at least the unwashed and full-blooded part, though the shovel and the axe were strangers to his hands. I fancy he had caught the idealism of the second half of the nineteenth century in a specially permanent form. I should not be surprised if he had known the Morris of *The Defence of Guenevere* in the latter days, when the poet held forth, like a new John Ball preaching of Adam the first gentleman farmer and Eve the lady weaver, on a soap box in Cheapside. At any rate, the "Britter" was the John Ball to generations of Oxonians.

Man, the lowliest man, the man of pure, stark manhood, can shape all the universe to his needs. So the "Britter" believed and taught. His own clothes preached his doctrine of the self-sufficiency of this wonderful creature which is man, in apprehension so like a god! He made them himself, to show how independent of capitalistic industry this god-creature could be. Or, at least, having once acquired them, he undertook to keep them in repair without benefit of tailors, to perpetuate them to the ages. Whatever shape or color his coat had been at first, no one could say. It had grown as the pearl grows, layer on layer. It had grown like the enlarging temples of the nautilus. As he grew older, the "Britter" had enlarged, like the sea creature, until he was of Falstaffian proportions. It had been the endeavor of his coat to

The "Britter"

keep pace; in some places it had not succeeded, notably the sleeves. It had long ago lost the power of meeting at the front. But, when I knew him, the British Workingman had hit upon the felicity of the primitive covering of strong man, the shawl. He wore it with a natural grace; as the early Piets must have worn it and the Parthians, twin thorns in the flanks of the Roman Empire, that false civilization, as the "Britter" would call it, with feet of clay whose institutions the proletarians of European nations are just beginning at last to lay in the dust. I think he must have felt the significance of the shawl as a symbol of all he stood for; he fairly flaunted it in the face of a society ridden with capitalists and tailors.

If his coat were a challenge to the conventions of tailors and proprietors, the trousers of this man were an arch of triumph of man's resourcefulness. They were unique among the "bags" of Oxford. They, too, were a building for the ages. And their architect was their wearer. As they had worn thin at those places where trousers *will* wear out, the "Britter" had hit upon the marvellous expedient of utilizing the unworn expanses above by the device of adding a new tier to the waistband. He simply sewed on a new piece of cloth at their top and went forth into society in his pride. All the greatest inventions have been simple ones like this. As the years went by, of course, the lines of his trousers parted with convention. The legs tended constantly to grow shorter. When I first knew him, they began at a point near his knees. Above was the story of the years told graphically in multi-colored patches that closed the doors on the past. They were as distinctive a touch to Oxford as Reynolds' windows at New or the Burne-Jones tapestry at Exeter.

Let no one suppose that this touch of color went unacclaimed by the undergraduates of Oxford. The clothes as the man the youth knew and loved. It was no blind devotion to the picturesque,

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either. Though the "Britten's" philosophy was as old and unfashionable as Adam, though he marched with the banners of the unlettered, he was a well-read man. His life had been given to books. I imagine he knew more about the philosophy of Anselm and Aquinas than any other man in the University. He knew something of almost everything. He devoured his books as he devoured the cheese that usually accompanied his reading. He could chuckle over statistics and read the newspapers—no small feat—with a look that was benign. He read all of them, too, ads and personals. His lust for all knowledge and for plain human interest was Gargantuan. He had not shovelled with his ideal of manhood simply because he had consecrated himself in his youth to learning. Somebody had to do the reading for the mute Miltons of barn and byre. His had been a University connection from the first, if only of a quasi-official nature. He had been the most glorious of the last of the "coaches," of that race now extinct as dew at noonday in the colleges. He had done the learning for the Lord knows how many undergraduates. He had fed more "firsts" into the mills of examination than any two "coaches" before him.

But his trade had utterly deserted him at last. Yet he stayed on at Oxford, living no one knows how, eating haphazardly any meal that came in his way. Nobody could tell in his latter years the permanent place of his lodging; perhaps, he had none for certain. Other great men have been above these trivial matters. His chief camping place was the Union Society. Here he was a landmark of the periodical room. He became more silent with the years, as if his great scheme for the salvation of the world through the man of labor were almost at its fruition. But, now and then, when enough young men aroused him, he could hold forth, in his voice that was honey and gold, big as his limbs and his heart, on the glory and the jubilee of the Coming of the King-

The "Britter"

dom. And he could give lessons sadly needed now to reformers who would burn the world with fire to save it. His was a philosophy built on kindness and charity. The world would see at last that the men who do its work with their hands should rule it and wear its purple. He was a Lenin conceived in love.

No one knows exactly how or when he died. Who can tell but it was of a broken heart at last? And the great plan of his later and silent years has never been found, even in its fragments. It is the way, sometimes, with great plans. Perhaps he burned his *magnum opus* in the lonely chamber where he died. Other philosophers have done such things. Charred paper there was in the grate, but no ashes of coals. . . . The last time I saw him was in a bleak December twilight. He was going up Brasenose Lane under the bare boughs of Bishop Heber's chestnut, the tree named for him who put mankind's yearning for beauty which is the simplest into the Christmas song,

*"Cold on His cradle the dewdrops are shining,
Low lies His head with the beasts of the stall."*

Perhaps he, too, the "Britter," had some memory in his mind that forlorn night of a time when he had dreamt of putting his own love for the lowly men of stables and beasts of the fields into a glorious work of his hands. But he was stooped, and the tattered shawl was woefully thin about his gaunt shoulders. His face under the ruined straw hat he wore in all seasons was like the old moon's as he turned the wall and went out of my sight forever.

But if there be such a place as Dante has pictured where the old philosophers of earth can live on and converse together through the ages, I know the "Britter" will be there; and he not one of the least of that company of sages. And he will monopolize their books, as he used to gather all the papers at the Union

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rooms and sit upon them and read them one by one; and he will read to them his favorite passages, warmed by the heat of his own proper person, on the kingship of the men of the glebe and ploughshare, who were the world's first aristocrats and who will, God willing, be the last.

The “Brigger”

I HAVE called him this, in an Oxonian patois of my own, to distinguish him from his special philosophic representative at Oxford, the “Britter.” He is the collective British workingman. He is one of the finest books in all Oxford to read. You can find him making motors in the Cowley factory, quicksetting hedges on Shotover Hill, selling his inimitable sausages in St. Ebbs, ploughing the patchwork fields of Hinksey Hill, or coming like a shepherd king of old up the High driving before him Berkshire sheep smutty as charcoal about their tender eyes. He is ruddy as the winds and rain can make him on his open face, and inevitably he wears, under a nose that generally tilts skyward, a moustache the color of beaten gold. And if you know him long enough, you will come to find that the gold does not end at the surface, but goes straight through him to his heart. That moustache, though, is the gonfalon of his pride and the index of his emotions. On gala days it is so twisted into twin flaming swords that one knows it must wound to the touch; on workdays, especially just before tea time, it droops. He is generally a well-set man, and his thighs are straight steel. His clothes are often too tight for his magnificent manhood. His eyes are mostly the hue of the skies he lives so much under, and his pith and marrow is independence, first, last, and always, *in saecula saeculorum*.

It is good to see the “Brigger” work. He goes at it all over. Whether it is straddling the rows of swedes or cabbages you see him or driving home bolts in blue steel, he has the air of being in the thing up to the hilt. He gives his trousers, the long-waisted British kind that are as much coat as nether coverings, hard wear. He spares neither knees nor hands. One thinks of Macaulay’s old-fashioned Roman of the time of Horatius, when one

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sees him at work; he, too, spares "nor limb nor life." It is a lesson in the rhythms of life to see the muscles play in his limbs; the poetry that Whitman loved but failed to put into its proper cadence; the rhythm of the marching stars, of the springing grass of April, and of the December sun as it wheels down at a long slant and rolls behind the trees till it dips from sight. His laboring never knows the wistful weariness of the Breton fishermen pulling at their nets, nor the hopeless burden of the ages in his stooping to the sheaves in the thighs of the peasant of the *Côte d'Or*. The "Brigger" is all flame, gales, springing larks, and ale, as he bends to his task. He gets a great joy out of his strength. He has put a blessing on the curse of Adam. If we wish to find living examples of the zest and gusto the Elizabethan men of letters had, it is not to present writers we should go, but to the British workingman. And the Cavalier is in his straight back. He is sheer wholeheartedness on sturdy British legs. Shakespeare has described him in young Harry's harangue to his yeomanry on the "vasty fields of France":

*"You, good yeomen,
Whose limbs were made in England, show us here
The mettle of your pasture; let us swear
That you are worth your breeding; which I doubt not;
For there is none of you so mean and base
That hath not noble lustre in your eyes.
I see you stand like grayhounds in the slips,
Straining upon the start."*

The centuries have done little damage to the marrow of the British yeoman, which is zest, or the briar and the blackthorn in his thighs.

It is good to see the "Brigger" rest. He knows well the fine art of being at ease. He has that gift for putting himself into a

The "Brigger"

state of pure being we had thought only the negroes of our South possessed, who follow the sun around their cabins through the long, unbroken trance of a sunny day. He can sink down against a thorny hedge and be in a white oblivion, untroubled of a thought even for gnats about him, before one realizes he has stopped working. When he rests, it is all over, brain as well as body. The Hindu mystics have much to learn from him.

It is splendid to see the "Brigger" play, too. He goes into his games like everything else—up to the chin. If only he could learn to play in his shirt sleeves more, he would be as picturesque as he is fervid. When he has a cricket bat in his hands, the eternal springs of boyhood well up in his soul and overflow all the years of his maturity. Beards, which he sometimes wears, do not keep his legs from kicking out like a colt's. Moustaches are forgotten, points and all, and his facial expressions are under those of the teens. For all his reverend trousers he feels the wind about his knees. He can stand on his head and carry even that off in a boy's best manner. Ordinarily soft of speech and remarkably so to transatlantic ears with his vowels not to be found in our land outside of Boston, he can become a Comanche in the twinkling of an eye. He and his ancestors before him have given the world its best and greatest games, cricket, baseball, rowing, and the different varieties of football. He has girdled the earth with games. His games, the games of democracy, have outlived and replaced the fine flowers of the Middle Ages, falconry, court tennis, jousting. Give him a stick for a bat and anything for a ball, and he is at home in any land; he will broil under the sun of India or rise triumphant over the Canadian frosts. Dynasties fall, institutions change; he plays the same games of bowling and ball in his inn yards that he played when England was an unimportant suburb of France and knights broke their lances against Saracen breastplates at Acre. The inns and the inn yards are twin unities

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of all English history. And into his games of democracy he has ever put the kingliest sense of fair play. The finest of chivalry's sports could not better the spirit of his playing. Through him chiefly the Anglo-Saxon race has given games to the nations.

But it is best of all to see the "Brigger" taking his ease in his inn. There he is, for unmixed human nature, unmatched. There he is in an unspoiled naïveté. Over his ale, which is as honest as his love for heartiness, he talks like a man standing alone in the unmoving center of the universe, and about him all the worlds and constellations do their spiral and circular dances for the delight of his frank, lusty eyes. Japan, Germany, America—they are but names to him. For him there are no oaks but the British, and he knows the oak is in him body and soul. His England, like the Rome of the Middle Ages, is the center of cosmos. It is still literally to him, as it was to all Englishmen in the heyday of the Virgin Queen,

*"This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war."*

There is not much of an opening in his armor of patriotism for the arrows of the *Third Internationale*. He does not *think* that one lusty Englishman can whip any two foreigners at war or at bowling: he *knows* it. So he has been hickory through all European history, and a mighty hard nut to crack. Kings have found him so, not less in America than in his own native pasture.

Of course, he has his own incomparable inn on his side. There are no other such clubs of red-blooded fellowship anywhere on earth that I know of. The French have their inns, and they have their sacred seats by the fire, each man with his own which no other dare usurp, where they can play their dominoes and drink

The "Brigger"

their *vin rouge*; but they are a more decorous people, even when they go in wooden shoes. They do not let themselves go so completely; their ego does not rise so to fill the universe. They can match the English in their liveliness and mirthfulness, even surpass them; but they lack the downright gift for solid hilarity. They are too much the artists to make themselves sheer gods of good nature. Why is it that our farmers, at least our New England ones, are so often lean and taciturn men, given to sour proverbs and biting adages? I think it is because we did not bring the British inn along with us when we came hither. Certainly, our farmers would be less lank and gray, if they had such places to drink in as the English inn. Who knows but they would take a kindlier view of their weather and their hungry soil?

The "Brigger" is magnificent in his ability to settle all the problems of the world off-hand over a tankard. The *Entente Cordiale*?—he would tell the French, whom he has always regarded with pity as he regards women, to go to the devil for an ally. Colonial things he dismisses as he would matters in the moon; they do not concern him. He could give pointers to the best Gladstone that ever stood in shoes. He can speak lightly of the Royal Family as if they were not to be knuckled to; and when that combination of the Black Prince and Prince Hal of blessed memory, the Prince of Wales, comes to town, he is the first to throw his hat to the winds and worship. He is royal in his inconsistency. His narrowness is his strength.

This provincialism is the stuff of which English lyrical poetry has been created. My country is the best of all the world, my shire is the fairest in my England, my town is the loveliest of all in the shire, and my garden and its roses are the Sirius and Aldebaran among the lesser flowers of my village. So runs the creed of the greatest lyric poets on earth; and this, in a more literal sense merely, is the creed of the "Brigger." He has not

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learned to think too much to hurt his boy's pride, or to take the bloom off this peach of life. He is a prince of hyperboles; he will stand up to all the world in his pride in his "woman," his "childer," and his power to handle himself in all situations. He may at times use undue roughness on his wife; but from what I know of that lady of his, she is usually well able to take good care of herself; and she loves him for it. He is the eternal boy in this matter; and boys treat girls as they would treat their own kind. After his ten centuries and more of boyhood, he has not grown up.

The "Brigger" is fond of being a father many times over. On his Sundays he marches at the head of squads of children inwards and alewards, and his wife brings up in the rear. He is the father of those little British boys who make you think of good things to eat. Cheeks as full as those of the apple and as red; legs that are tight in their green, knit breeches, the sunshine on their bare heads and the skies themselves in their eyes. He is the parent of the maternal girls in pinafores who manoeuvre babies like matrons. His are the Gargantuan infants that lie at rosy peace with the world in the prams one meets. All in all, Colonies and the United States, his ancestors and he have pretty plentifully peopled the earth with his image.

He is the backbone of England, and with his cousins the hope of democracy throughout the world. He has been the unity of English history. His soul goes marching on in our land, in Canada, Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand. He has belted the earth with the furrows of his plough, made hearths and lit the fires of home upon them until his fires follow the evening forever. He broke the pride of the Middle Ages, the knights of the golden spurs of France, with his yewbow at Crécy. His voice was in the preaching of Wyclif and the Lollards; he preached the eloquentest sermon in the world on the sweet reasonableness of the



Old Mill, Wheatley.

The "Brigger"

simple life, of hard work and high faith and trust in one's neighbor in the person of Piers Plowman seeing his visions on the Malvern Hills five hundred years ago. He brought religious tolerance at last into the world in the Civil Wars. And when he shall come at last to rule England, as he surely will, if he has learned a little more about the graces of literature and art, poetry and learning, and so is better able to wear the crowns of life, he will be a very splendid king indeed. He will wear the gold and lace as he took the kingliness of chivalry to wear at Crécy. And so—

Here's to you, friend "Brigger"!

Backwaters of Berkshire

HISTORICALLY, Berkshire as a county saw its best days a thousand years ago, in Alfred's time. The Danes, pillaging the Thames valley from the sea to Oxford, had passed its chalky grandeur by. But one fine red morning they marched westward. All the livelong night the Saxons had waited in their battle-burnies hard by the twisted ash tree of Ashdown. Their spears were cold with the dew of the morning, but their hearts like the east, when the Danes came over the shoulder of the downs with the sun. And the shock of their fury gave the red-haired sea hounds sleep under the treeless turf till Doomsday. From any corner of Berkshire you have only to lift your eyes to see shining the banner of Alfred, the great White Dragon of the West Saxons, carved in the highest chalk of the downs to remind men forever of the glory of Wedmore. Popularly he is the White Horse; but he is the most dragonish of dragons that ever guarded treasure hoards of jewels and flagons and got themselves slain for being the first northern connoisseurs of *objets d'art* by some yellow-bearded prototype of Saint George. At any rate, there he ramps, his coat scraped anew from century to century by the descendants of the men of Ashdown, the great seal of Berkshire's day of glory.

Once more the lonely, lovely county of sheep passes for a moment over the threshold of history. Some century later, in the brief heyday of the Danes, Canute sat throned in Faringdon. But of the jovial Canute, whose vainglory God's tides alone could humble, as the old legend runs, there remains less trace than of Alfred. Only a great silver drinking horn inscribed with his name keeps his fame in the shadows of an obscure manor house. For the rest, there is some running to and fro of men of arms in Crom-

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well's time and before—though all the breaking of church glass is always attributed to Cromwell by the countryfolk, since he is the nearest in time—the rest is oblivion. Squires a little more thickheaded than in other shires, yeomen leaner by virtue of the scanty loam between bracken and downland, many succeeding hosts of poor shepherds living their little days with the music of their beasts in their ears and sun and rain in their faces and God's simplicity in their hearts, passing on through the centuries as peacefully and unnoticed by the world as the stars that march over the downs. So the tale of Berkshire runs.

In this county the world of steam and electricity seems still far away. The towns would be no more than sleepy villages in America. The only industry is the very ancient one to which Odysseus and the other kings came home from Troy, the trade Abraham followed and the other men who discovered the Great Shepherd who is God out in loneliness under the great Arabian stars; shepherds watch the miracle of green grass passing over into the fleece that keeps men warm. The fame of the Berkshire sheep has gone around the earth from this home of the most picturesque and the oldest of men's callings; for, like New England that produces from hungry, sour soil the tastiest of apples, Berkshire out of thin herbage on dry chalk hills has brought forth the finest wool. It is the miracle of the wellspring in the desert, the mercy called Providence.

Though Berkshire lies in a backwater of history, it has one glory that is ever new. There are the downs, great rolling hills patient as time, eloquent in their bareness, majestic in the silence of wide spaces. Other southern counties have them, but they have been coming up all the way from the Channel to be at their grandest and loneliest here. Berkshire has no need of the sea which makes the magic of many shires. There is about the sweeping downs the eternity of the sea, the calmness of the sea, and,

Backwaters of Berkshire

better than on the sea itself, an isolation and solitude that no sails ever break. Here and there are dark patches, forests cohorted in hollows out of the reach of the winds. Hidden away in the downs lie villages you may stumble on for an afternoon of as keen delight as any of the great men of great beards ever had in their seventeenth century when new worlds were making the new cosmographers the busiest of mankind. But chiefly upon the downs there are the eternal shadows of clouds marching over the shoulders of the world, a vast silence, a high sense of the endurance of things, serenity akin to the massing clouds, and a wistful spaciousness. High, windy birds and clouds surely achieve their majestic effects as fully here as over wide waters. And that nothing may be lacking, the pathetic bleatings of sheep far away give the monotone of the sound of the sea. Perhaps it is only natural, then, that so many of the many windburnt lads the Berkshire shepherd finds time to rear, when they come to manhood and ways that must turn away from Berkshire of the scanty livelihood, turn to the richer shire of the sea.

Because of its loneliness and aloofness from the small ways of men, the downland has the aura of legend that such places gather, even in the face of sunshine and wind. Over its slopes Druids have wandered for the mistletoe and holly, stuff of black magic; Roman legionaries surely have been here, for there is the monument of their orderly genius in empire building, the trim fosses and right-angled company streets of one of their camps, perched on the crest of the downs; Saxon and Dane shocked here, and brave bones bleach in the chalk. So it is only to be expected that over the downs of a night goes Wayland the Blacksmith, half a jest and yet half a belief when winds are out trampling the midnight downs. This mysterious Saxon god lingered after Thor had faded into his own thunder and maniacal Tiu and golden-haired Freya were gone forever from memory. So useful a deity would escape

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the *Götterdämmerung*, would come by night to befriend fair-haired children of those who loved him once, shoeing their horses for a bit of money left on the moors. Not a god of beauty or music, but one who shoes horses well. . . . So homely the first and the last of the pagan deities of our race. There is a mysterious stone, too, with holes where one can blow an eerie trumpeting. The strangest beliefs about it seem gospel truths when curlews are weaving runes on twilit skies.

But there is more than legend and loneliness in Berkshire. There are villages that artists would love and philosophers choose to dwell in. They would be the old Greek sort of philosophers, men seeking the unities of the universe in fire or water, in laughter or tears. Such men would find their "first principles" inside whitewashed walls, under thatch with red wallflowers and mosses. Pythagoras in Berkshire would have chosen window geraniums instead of beans for his philosophic touchstone; Anaxagoras, primroses between flagstones. The people of these villages have gotten the blowing of cottage roses into their souls, floods of Berkshire sunshine and fleeting shadows into their eyes; they are half creatures of earth's symphony, air and water, fire and earth move elementally in them; the winds play upon them and the clouds above their downs. Their villages, each with its little square-towered church keeping the old faith among the elms, the kingdoms of the rooks, drowse away the years by sleepy waterways. Little worlds of all lusty loveliness of manhood, all white purity of motherhood, and the blue serenity of childhood, large enough for all joys and sorrows between the cradle and the grave. They lie at the ends of lanes, off the straight highway the Romans built on the ridges of the downs. You must go down to them in their hollows of hawthorn and peace. And going, you leave hurry and distraction; you come under green witchery of contentment; quiet lives lived as men have lived them for a thousand years, in

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fields hallowed with the bones of their fathers, in houses sweetened by long pageants of children.

There is Tubney. I suppose not twenty tourists in the world know this little place of the odd name. Yet a philosopher lives there. He has old copper teakettles for sale; but he never sells them, for the world does not go by his shop. He does better; he treasures them so, shines and polishes and thinks about them so long that half the wisdom in living they have seen in many homes is his and more than half the comfort and ease they have magically given to sweethearts and grandparents sitting in the fire-light. I doubt if he would consider selling a single one; unless it were a question, as it was in my case, of a gift for one's first-born child, born in the June dream of Tubney and needing to take away into the world a talisman for happiness through all the years to come. One could not do better than be born in Tubney; one had deserved the best. And in Tubney of the great elms, each a forest in itself spreading cool pavilions of green and gold, is a man with the laugh of a boy out of school and the beard of Methuselah tangling the grass as he mows. He uses a sickle and an implement for raising the tuft of grass to the stroke such as one sees on Egyptian bas-reliefs. He taught me more than I shall ever learn from books about the secret of remaining forever young. He ought to turn alchemist and write books about elixirs. I never really realized the greatness of Abraham Lincoln, either, until a shepherd with bluest Berkshire eyes told me between clicks of his shearing shears all the worship he had for that kinsman of Cincinnatus and Cato. I fancy he had read all the books ever written on Lincoln; certainly he knew every homely detail of a life lived three thousand miles away in a land he had never seen. He staggered me with dates and figures of our Civil War. And unerringly he found every wellspring of nobility in Lincoln's character; and, sure enough, each was a wellspring such as time

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does not know how to change, as one may find in Berkshire, in Latium, and in Illinois. Here in the flesh was a "village-Hampden." Across seas and years the Lincolns, the unsung and the sung, had touched hands.

In Tubney, too, I saw my first field of poppies. It is as idle to try to describe that as the way the skylark sounds as he circles out of sight. I can only add that it had the whole blue and distant glory of the downs for background and tides of sunlight upon it. I shall always remember the gypsies, too, who had halted their caravan beside it; kindred souls of the passionate vagrants of the fields. The caravan had boxes of geraniums and lace curtains at the windows, a dog with all the wisdom of the roads lying under the steps; and there was a rabbit smelling like Esau's pottage as he turned and roasted on the spit. A dark woman tended him and a little boy with eyes like stars in January.

One can multiply the Tubneys. Only each succeeding one has graces and schools of philosophy quite its own. No wonder the Scholar-Gypsy made it a point to visit the inns on the lonely Berkshire moors. They are seats of philosophy second only to the groves and market places of ancient Athens. No other shire has such inns, or so many of them. Every village has its church, of course, and perhaps a few cottages, sometimes only one or two; but always there is the inn. At Newbridge there are two, and Newbridge has no cottages at all. It is a fine place, though, and quite in the English character in its name; for, now that London Bridge *has* fallen down, it is the oldest bridge over the Thames. One could do worse than live at Newbridge. The bridge has its halo of history; Cavaliers routed Puritan pikemen upon it. It has beauty; seven lichened arches through which the swallows skim. And it has an inn on either end. The *Rose* offers the browner ale; the *May Bush* the riper wisdom in the mouth of its host. You may pass from strength to strength. A very proper sort of bridge.



Newbridge, Berkshire.

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Farther down the river Godstow has no cottages, either, only the ivied ruins of the nunnery where bloomed the Rose of the World for Henry the King,

ROSA MUNDI, NON ROSA MUNDA,

and the *Trout*, the jewel of inns. Hither, or so the old host declares who wears the beard of Sir Francis Drake, the nuns from the cloisters nearby, in days when holy faith and mellow brew went hand in hand, used to come for their daily cup. In his seat inside the great fireplace, with its spits large enough for the red deer of long ago and winches for turning them, this man has rubbed elbows with all wisdom. Men are his books. The past is all ruddy flesh for him. In another age he would have written such a book of all wisdom as that of Vincent of Beauvais, starting with sticks and stones and beasts, passing thence to man from Creation to the Last Judgment, setting down all one needs to know to be wholly wise. As it is, he abridges it into an evening's conversation over a fragrant pipe in the firelight. And there is something of the whole sweep of the universe in his talk. He always ends by speaking in awe of the demigod who came into his life once, a Texan undergraduate at Oxford, who spent a vacation at the *Trout*. There was a man out of the Golden Age; and his locks, to hear his praises sung, must have dripped ambrosia. For he strove with the rustics of the countryside and vanquished them all at both of the very ancient and golden games of quoits and boxing. And he defeated the host himself at skittles, that Mediaeval game, played on the wooden-paved alley in the *Trout* yard, in which one bowls an impossible egg-shaped ball at inconceivably grotesque wicker pins. That was enough. The host had never been beaten before. So the man from Texas joined the company of Perseus and Castor. The host's cup was full, then; but it overflowed when the American beat the host's wife at draughts. She

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also had never lost a game before. . . . Like Socrates and many another great and wise man, the host has a single fly in this amber we call life. It is his wife. Somehow, years ago, the breeches of the house got shifted. . . . But, after all, it is philosophy only that matters. And perhaps it was for the best, for even a philosopher could not make the strawberry jam the host's wife concocts; whole ripe berries, unbroken and unbruised, poised in a suspended Junetime in solid nectar!

There are so many inns and all so different in ale and talk and games that one needs a year to get a nodding acquaintance even. The one at Dry Sandford—to set it off from Sandford of the river, though a lusty stream turns a mill wheel of centuries in this place called dry—is a house of shepherds; tall, lean men, lithe as the dogs that worship always at their feet, brown, and wrinkled like November pippins with all the four winds of the year, with eyes that grow bluer and tenderer with age, very soft of voice but hung with flails for hands and all whipcord and hickory at thigh and shoulder. They speak and laugh like children, when they will, but drink their ale solemnly and know how to sit together in silence by the hour; for they have learned that greatest of the arts among men, the perfect communion of silence among friends. Lonely nights and days on the downs have taught them that. There are no finer or truer-blue men walking the hills; or men more full of the sun and the winds of the world. They know best how to make much happiness out of their few possessions in life, wives and children, roses and bacon, sunlight, and ale and faith.

In Berkshire, peerless hunting county by right of open run and springy turf, it would never do to pass the inns of Faringdon by. There are two of them, the *Crown* and the *Lion*. Why there is not the third, the *Unicorn*, to complete the trilogy of actors in the old couplet on the battle of the English royal beasts for the

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diadem, I cannot say. Surely somebody's oversight. At any rate, there they are, coaching inns of the old kidney, huge, rambling, with an arched entrance through which can pass a coach-and-four, built around courtyards large enough to hold an army of grooms. The rooms are all on different levels, of odd sizes, whimsical, but all have casements opening on the sweep of Berkshire hills. To get to your room you must take an old-fashioned candle-holder and travel miles, seemingly, while your head is full of the dewy stars the ale has lighted, "upstairs, downstairs, in the lady's chamber," for so tortuous is the way. And old furniture smells of bygone glory. Below stairs, in the great public rooms, whole joints appear at table, even in these lean-kine years since the War, and unbelievable whole salmon to threaten one's soul with the cardinal sin of gluttony. The tankards are also out of another and more heroic time. Oxonians who have "floored their sconces," drained the lesser cups of their colleges at one draught without a tremor, come to grief thereby. It is at these tables that the men in soiled "pink" sit from midnight to cockcrow, after long runs over the autumn downs behind the hounds; here they compare spills, feast, and make the rafters forget the passing of the years with the immortal *John Peel*,

"With his hounds and his horn in the morning."

One would need Homer's gift to catalogue the Berkshire villages and their quiet charms. No one would forgive the omission of Wytham—Wytham under the high greenwood that is so full of the sleepy witchery of cuckoos calling, Wytham where all the cottages wear thatch overgrown with roses white and red, Wytham of the largest and tastiest and heavenliest strawberries in Christendom, Wytham of the children whose hair is red from being so perpetually in the sun. Nor would one dare to pass Hinton Waldrist by. For there is the birthplace of the best roses in the

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United Kingdom; and there families are known by the pedigrees of their *Irish Elegances* and *Longworth Dawns* rather than their coats-of-arms. Rosebushes are worshipped like ancestors and passed on in families like estates. One marries into beds of roses. At Hinton, too, stands a ruined cottage, called Blenheim Palace by the rustic wags, which is said to be haunted. Long ago a man slew his wife in the house; and from that day to this, so a venerable water carrier told me as he rested his pails from his yoke, all the apple trees in the yard have yielded only blood-red fruit. Literary folk will shudder if Fyfield is not mentioned, where Arnold's maidens danced their May Day dances about the great elm. But shudder or not, that May tree is in my own quainter Tubney of the great trees, and yards outside of Fyfield; and, anyway, it is in its dotage now, fallen away to a stump. Much closer to my heart is Bablock Hithe, not because the poet sings of it, but because I still owe an indignant waterman there a penny for pulling me in his punt that travels on a cable across the "stripling Thames." I could have done it for myself, and, in any case, I had no money with me. I have a keener recollection, too, of Marcham. I was allowed by the good people of the manor house there to dig in the ruins of the abbey outpost which they use to store potatoes in; and I unearthed some lovely fragments of old glass and pieces of leads from the panes and the bones of a dinosaur, I think. Though they politely gave me tea and I as politely praised rather doubtful bric-a-brac in the shape of ostrich eggs or elephant tusks, I could not seem to fire them with enthusiasm for my dinosaur. I am afraid he is still pathetically mixed with potatoes. Perhaps dinosaurs are no rarity in Marcham.

Berkshire, more than most shires, keeps green in the memory. It is an humble county of forgotten villages and of men, judged by the graspers of the world, obscure. But it is a place that gets into the heart; it gets into the marrow of one's bones. It remains

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like a thought that will come to one under a starry sky of man's unity and loveliness in all his humblest ways and loves, joys and griefs. It is a place one can no more forget than the sea. It is a beauty one has loved.

Epicurus Afloat

EPICURUS, I think, must have spent his boyhood in some Grecian prototype of the punt. At any rate, his followers today in Oxford live in this craft, almost, when summer has sweetened the earth. It is a square-ended boat, flat of bottom and wide of beam, built for comfort. It reminds one of Cleopatra, of purple barges trailing silks on the lotos-starred Nile. It is the last word in comfortable ease of an age schooled in luxury. Its very name brings visions of immaculate flannels set off with vivid sashes, pictures of girls in summery white or flowered muslin and their smiles under the shade of parasols. It speaks of lazy reclining at full length on cushions of velvet, of idling away hours through golden afternoons, of sleeping the light sleep of summer on careless waterways, of dreaming beneath the cool beauty of quiet willow trees. After the shady side of a stack of new mown hay it is the sweetest place of them all to drowse.

But all this is spoken for the passenger of the punt. For him who stands and poles, with the long and heavy spar of a brigantine at least, to urge the craft on its way there is usually nothing but bitterness. Punting is one of the fine arts one must be born to; it can seldom be acquired. The man who comes new to the art in his twenties has come almost twenty years too late. When the uninitiated stands up on the little deck astern—ah, slippery deck of guile! it takes the most of a man's skill merely to stand there!—and sets himself to preside at the pole, the punt will go in any of a multitude of undesired directions. It will slide off sideways, it will go backwards, it will turn about like a top. It is full of deceit. Many a punter of spotless flannels has been left, pole in hand, in the river while the punt has gone on elsewhither. Or if one succeeds in doing the miraculous and stays on the deck

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through thick and thin, he will hear rich examples of oratory from boats he never dreamed he could hit. He may upset a tea-tray poised athwart a neighbor punt; and if he does that, he had best get on his way without much further thought of his punting form. And there are trees always ready to treat him like Absalom while his punt goes merrily on.

Punting enjoyment, for the punter, is in direct ratio to the nature of and distance to the bottom of the river. Even your adept is lost in new waters. Now, river bottoms are things most whimsical; for miles they may stretch on at the same sweet level, and then, just when the wielder of the pole is all rosy confidence, the bottom without warning drops down and disappears. And the ending is swift and wet. Or again you may feel the hard gravel sure under your point until you put all your weight on the pole, only to have that pole slide with sickening ease yards into some unexpected mudbank. Then you do one of two things, neither of which is graceful. Either you leave the boat to stay with your pole, or else, by some superhuman recovery of balance, you remain on your hands and knees in the rocking punt and leave the pole. This always happens just when the river bank is crowded with those upon whom you wish to make a good impression with your skill. It is a strange and pathetic fact that for mile after mile all will be serene, and then you will round a point and come upon your friends, and everything will go wrong. Yet punting is a glorious sport—for those who recline on the cushions in the bottom of the boat and read books and give helpful suggestions or make witty observations to him who stands and poles.

Once you are safely ensconced on the cushions in the bottom of the punt, and another is doing the poling, then the glories of the two rivers that wed at Oxford are yours. You may go up or down; if it is up, then you have the choice to make of two enticing waterways, the Cherwell or the Isis. Should you choose the Cher,



Magdalen and the Cher.

Epicurus Afloat

you have the country at once, woodlands and meadows. You go under the shadow of Magdalen Bridge and into the elms of "Mesopotamia"; the boughs overhead make the river a cathedral aisle, and the sun slants down in shafts of green and gold through the leafy windows of the trees. It is always very quiet, very much dedicated to dreams, this winding stream here. Now and then the white towers of colleges show through the openings in the green, the deer of Magdalen Park may gaze at you with starry eyes as you pass. So you go up along Addison's Walk, over the rollers, skirting the emerald paradise of Parson's Pleasure where white, naked figures remind you of Attic friezes, and you are come out into a world that palpitates with the golden haze that buttercups send up into the sky from English meadows. Sunlight and shade, open fields and groves of trees, all the way into the hills of Banbury of the buns. The Cher is a river of indolence, an idler's Elysium. "Slackers"—fair word ruined by the War, alas!—line its banks lying in their punts tethered to the shore. Some there are who take young ladies from St. Hugh's or Lady Margaret Hall on a quest for tea among the sylvan hostelries of the river; you may come upon them fishing for teaspoons that they have lost on the bottom or pop jugs that must be returned to the dispensers of refreshment. But the ideal way is to thread the woodland mazes far up where cows can wade the river that is become a brook; there a company of a few best friends sufficient unto themselves find that angling or Aeschylus has an added charm in the green gloom of interlacing boughs.

The main river, the Isis, also has its pleasures. After one has passed the nightmare of gas works, one comes out into the wide reaches of Port Meadow—the common of Oxford citizens for a thousand years—where the geese of the good burghers crop the grass. Houseboats with lace curtains and geraniums at the windows and a wise man or two at the door to get into talk with,

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such things one finds here. And after Port Meadow the river becomes eloquent with the towers of great elms and with the flocks of wild, white swans. It washes the bower of fair Rosamund at the crumbling stone and ivy of Godstow. Here is the *Trout*, a haven of piscatorial peace that would delight old Izaak Walton and warm the cockles of his heart. And farther up still, above the hanging woodlands of Wytham, is the Eynsham toll-bridge, where by the decree of that immortal tyrant George III a pram pays as much as a motor-truck to cross because of the fact of its four wheels. It is here that the boatman enters into a quiet complete where sleepy trees hold up the drowsy summer clouds and herons stand mooning in the whispering reeds. So one can travel in the best of the ways of travelling and prolong his Odyssey to the point where the two daughters of the Isis join the river, the sedgy Windrush of the name that is music and the "perfect Evenlode":

*"A lovely river, all alone,
She lingers in the hills and holds
A hundred little towns of stone,
Forgotten in the western wolds."*

Or one can wander the other way downstream from Oxford to Nuneham Park, where "Capability" Brown, prince of artificers of the artificial eighteenth century, who saw a stream merely as an excuse for an elaborate bridge, or made a stream where none flowed before, where this man who so reworked nature to man's behest has built his monument of landscape gardening. Farther on the spires of monkish Abingdon float in the river; and, beyond, in labyrinthine backwaters where cows stand knee-deep in watercresses, checkerboards of colored fields are spread below the crest of Sinodun, the key-hill of the upper Thames valley, with

Epicurus Afloat

its ramparted slopes and dark crown of trees whose roots are among the bones of Briton, Roman, Saxon, Dane.

But whichever way one goes the waterways are ways to peace. Jam and cheese await one and the ale of many an inn. And the old beauty of running water, and the young beauty of friends.

Saints and Cream and Devon Things

NORTH DEVON was very lucky in its saints. Its coast was well within reach of the ships of the Irish holy men; so its spiritual weal was assured from the first. And what Brandan and the other longbeards with hearts of children and flowers for tongues could not do, when the weather was inclement and the waves ran high, the saints of Cornwall next door did. So there came in from sea along with other shining things, white birds blown on the long winds and tropic fragrances and sunny legends of Atlantis and far, fair lands to the south, the Cross that wears the Aureole, the sign of the Celtic Christians. There is no one chief saint whom all Devonians may thank for this early beauty of holiness. Songbirds do not organize as do the crows and rooks. These saints were Irish or Cornishmen; of course they would not agree; church boards and canons and rules were Original Sin to them; they came hither to escape these very things. No, they were free lances in sanctitude; simple souls taking their holiness in their own way, tending their nets and building their churches between the herring schools and the coming of the whittings. Each picked out the little haven of his heart's desire and kept to it. Each kept his peace on his own hearthstones and had his own sweet blue patch of ocean between his own cliffs. And there was to be plenty of mead such as only an Irish saint could brew. Souls there were to save, of course; but in no roughshod harrowing of men's hearts night and day, year out, year in. There were bees to train in the way of turning the golden gorse flower into golden honey, little pigs to be brought up, big blue-eyed men to help at laying over the furrows, children to guide where the apples hung reddest, boats to mend; and now and then, at decent intervals, a miracle or so to do, poor, hungry nets to be

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filled to bursting with salmon for a king, a widow's loaf to be blessed with offspring of fragrant, miraculous loaves of a whole year's baking. The holy men knew that too much church-a-day business grows a burden and that too many miracles spoil the broths of wonder and faith. But when a cottage thatch caught afire, the local saint knew just the prayers to say to put out the flames; when household fairies got unruly and tore the bed linen or kept the butter from coming, he could always put the mischief straight and win the fairies back to their kindly helpfulness.

That was the beauty of the Celtic saint. He knew how to make friends of the fairies. He never dreamt of using bell, book, and candle to drive them out of the land of the living; he put haloes around them, put *Saint* in front of their names, if they insisted on his going that far, made the wells where they cured blindness and the trees where they snared young lovers in nets of magic shrines and holy places. If some fairy made it his specialty to make old and wrinkled people youths again, the saint let him keep his trade and listed him among the saints of Eastertide. He kept the fairies for neighbors. Now the Devon fairies, like their cousins the Irish, are quite the pleasantest in the world. And, thanks to the saints, North Devon is still green with them. So North Devon people have never gotten very far away from the souls of roses and of all green, growing things, or from the soul of the sea; keeping neighbors to the fairies, they have kept close to peace.

Saint Piran, now, he was a proper man to make Christians of Devon folk. He came to Cornwall from Ireland when the church there had gotten to be too much of a going business establishment to suit him. One fine morning when some sharp legate, an archangel of efficiency given to correcting the grammar of country saints, came to visit Piran, he found his bird had flown off over the sea. In his new land Piran became a thorough Cornishman. After he had built his church hard by the sea that had so

Saints & Cream & Devon Things

befriended him on the morning of his need and that now brought him his breakfasts of herring already kippered for his table or smelts holding their own baked tails in their mouths, after the usual miracles were over and done with, he settled down to enjoy himself among his new converts. Food there was a-plenty, and he asked but little in the way of luxuries. The days were all the one long blue serenity a good saint loves. Piran, I am afraid, like the rest of his parish, did get rather too firmly into the habit of following the sun about his cottage. The services in the church got to be rather desultory, too, just the Easter and the Christmas ones and a christening whenever a Cornish wife got her energies together enough to add to the brood about her board, which wasn't often.

But the old demon of efficiency found Piran out at last. Quiller-Couch, who is the fountain of all wisdom that is Cornish, could tell you much better than I the story of the Saint's new affliction and how he put the intruders upon his holy laziness to rout. But it seems that the report came one day that Saint Peter, no less, and as many as two archangels, not to mention lesser luminaries, were approaching Piran's parish bent upon a stern visitation. Here was a fine kettle of fish! The Saint gathered his flock, and they hurried to the church to set it in order. But lo, when they came to the place, no church was to be seen; the shifting Cornish sands had buried it completely. They fetched shovels, and they shovelled from cockcrow to cricketsong; but they had succeeded in unearthing only the tip of the steeple. The stars came out upon them still digging at the sand. At crack of day Saint Peter and his lieutenants came into a deserted village; not a chimney pot wore smoke; the chickens were unfed. They looked in vain for the church. At last, when they were getting somewhat red about the face as even archangels will, they heard a sound, a faint sound as of singing. It came almost from underfoot. They

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cast about, and found the tip of the steeple of Piran's church. Peter threw open the little window at the top of the spire and looked down. Piran and all his people were on their knees singing and praying by turns with never a break. The Custodian of the Key of Heaven called sternly down to the Cornishman to give an account of such goings-on. At the sound of Peter's voice, Piran cast aloft his eyes, and fell on his face in thanksgiving. When Peter thundered to know why Piran's church was buried thus in the sand, the man of Cornwall replied, between ejaculations of praise, that he had heard that the Devil and all his fiends were descending upon his parish and that he and his congregation had prayed unceasingly all the night for protection and concealment, and lo the very sands of the sea had spread wings over their holy house and hidden it. . . . It is said that Peter was not seen in Cornwall or Devon again for many and many a year. Yet Piran did bestir himself rather more thereafter; and he even journeyed across the Tamar and brought the light to some Devon villages.

It is a poor village in Devon that cannot muster a Piran or two in its history. And they are all Irishmen or Cornish. They are as thick as the larks over the coast. Let's see, there is Saint Yeo who taught Devonshire men how to catch salmon by means of lanthorns and some praying; Saint Edy who showed them the way to fetch down rain, Saint Udy, the way to lift it again; Saint Iva—a lady saint—who first showed a lamp at her window to guide the fishing boats in by night and so invented lighthouses; Saint Pancras who created the dreamless slumber of Devon that falls on one with the dews and the first big stars of evening; Saint Morwen who first traced the zigzag outlines of the waves, which are never far away from Devon lives, upon church arches and walls—one could never catalogue them all. It would mean the writing of whole new volumes of the *Golden Legend*.

Saints & Cream & Devon Things

But Brannock would deserve a volume by himself. He came to the Devon coast like a great shining light on a midnight sea, in a boat whose sails were white flames. It was a night of great storm, yet the breakers smoothed into quiet pools for his keel. The desolate sands where he landed, the shifting bars and dunes of Saunton, are witness of the "Saint tun" which he founded. Out of the wastes sprang Saint Brannock's hamlet, springs welled up, roses and trees grown overnight invited parishioners to his place. Brannock's first care was to build his church. In a dream he was told to build where he should find a sow with her litter; and he went forth at dawn and found these holy, humble wardens of sanctitude so dear to North Devon folk ever after. Wild stags came and offered their necks to the harness; with them the holy man hauled great timbers from those forests which Devon men swear you may see to this day, when the tides run very low, standing petrified under the wastes of water far out into the sea. Devon men will add, too, that on a clear night you may see lights shining down there among the tree trunks; who knows but this comes because heaven could never leave in darkness those places where shining Brannock walked of yore. He had a staff that shed a radiance in the dark, a well that gave him who drank the gift of sweetest song, a servant Abel who drew the fish in shoals to such shores as he walked, and an oak tree growing up through his church that remained green through all the summers and winters. But the marvel of all Brannock's possessions was the dun cow that followed him always, even to the pulpit and altar; this cow had the magic and welcome power of serving her master in time of famine with her flesh, to be restored again from bare bones at the bidding of the Saint. You can see all these marvels, as well as the Saint himself, the pig and her family of blessed omen, the staff, and the cow, carven in Braunton church. The saints of the first water are not too much above our common

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earthiness: pigs and kine, wells and trees, these are the jewels of very beatitude.

Nor can the Irishman, Saint Suibine, be passed over in silence; for he was shipwrecked in Woolacombe Bay, and he settled there, forever after guiding ships past his melancholy and lonely shores, full of the treachery of reefs and quicksands, by the sound of his great harp as he played the sweetest songs of a world at its morning, the songs of the Irish fairies. Saint Aubyn, who sat so long with his holy thoughts that his legs became forever crossed, as his statue can prove, holds the hamlet of Georgeham; Saint Lawrence, that prince of idlers, rivals Aubyn in his record for undisturbed meditation, for he gives his name to the balmy and lazy hot summer weather. Saint Nectan names Welcombe by the wellspring of sweet water he struck from the rock while on one of his long walking trips in Devon; he knew the language of the bees and told them how to store up honey; he was the first of a never-ending line of walkers who have blessed Devon roads ever since; he invented inns and, I think from the sound of his name, Devon cream. At any rate, he made walking in Devon one of the holiest ceremonies of life, one of the arts, one of the short cuts to happiness.

Saint Nectan, I say, may have invented Devon cream. If *he* did not do this, then some other saint as sweet in name and nature as he most surely did. For the best things of Devon—and here is the best of them all—have something of the flavor and the savorliness of great religion about them. If the simplest and loveliest things in this world go in aureoles, Devon is full of saintliness to this very day. The peace of bees humming, the miracles of daily food provided by hens and cows, eggs that hold a morning's beatitude, cream that is a foretaste of Beulah Land. The wholesomeness of that old Ionian Christianity has never gone out of this shire. Men still tend and mend their nets with old faith in

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their hearts. They come home to haven as often as the early saints singing songs under the stars. So, of course, their food and their wives taste the best on earth. . . . I shall never be able to describe Devon cream, after all, though I had had hopes, and have been trying to steal up softly upon the subject. No one has yet described it, nor can I. But I learned how it is made from a daughter of Devon; and, having tried to make it since in another land and in other pans than the Devon crocks, I know now that it is all the work of the Devon saints and the Devon fairies. The cream will not rise into that thick foam of sheer delight in an alien place. Perhaps the virtue lies partly in the homemade crockery of Devon clay; but more certainly it is the witching marriage of the sweet savors of the sea with the matchless tang of thyme and odor of Devon orchards and meadows that makes the food of the angels going by the name of clotted cream. And to such things as these the fairies attend. Whoever has not heard of the Devon saints, or at least felt his religion to be something like appleblossoms or first humble bluets of a young year, full of the grace of simplicity—he has yet to find a real religion. The man who has never eaten his June strawberries with clotted cream has never known the taste of strawberries at all, has never found how closely Eden borders on our earth.

To see North Devon opening up like a hilly field of wild bluebells, blue on blue and haze on deeper haze, as your ship goes up the Bristol Channel, is to know at once that here is a coast which saints would love forevermore and would dwell in, though all the rest of the shores and lands of the earth turned into wastes of machinery and slag heaps of an industrial cataclysm. A land of old sunshine, though all the rest of the world darkened under the twilight of all the gods our fathers loved. Fairies would always have a home here. The dew would be on things forever; and the powdery bloom of June's first roses. Cottage bowls would

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wear haloes of an evening; there would be a great and secret radiance about all things like that about a single candle flame. And the great breasts of nature, where we were cradled once and worshipped all, would be still let down to men's lips in the hour of the folding of the sheep and the homecoming of the kine, in the hour of lamps and the fires on the hearth. Earth's old blue and green loveliness keeping forever wild and spotless, like the stars, like the primroses, like children's eyes.

And when your feet are once on the high turnpikes of North Devon that wind like ribbons along the cliffs, behold it is all true. The fairies are here and the saints. It doesn't matter in the least that they live like very humble folks in cottages washed very white and keeping out of the wind under the hills; it doesn't matter that they are digging away on their tilt-up cabbage fields and showing mainly the seats of their patched corduroys as they bend to their steep gardening. But whether they hoe at garden plots where potatoes are crowded by primroses, or whether it is in their tiny harbors you find them, caulking their fat boats or running the nets clear of seaweed, their eyes have that twinkle which gives them away. They themselves will confess they know more of the fairies than children's books can tell:

*There's piskies up to Dartymoor,
An' tidden gude yew zay there bain't.*

*An' what med do so brave a thing
As thic' white spells to tak an' weave,
But li'l piskies' vitty hands,
Or God Himself as give 'em leave?*

If a man six-foot-three in his stocking feet with an amber beard that has shaken out its glory to all the four winds of the Atlantic tells you there are more shining creatures than glow worms

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on the moors at night, what is there to do but believe? As for the saintliness, you need go no further than the first cottage you find to see how Brannock and Piran keep their immortality. The winsome light pouring out at low casements through jasmine and honeysuckle gives these cottages away as abiding places of saintly men of old. If you go inside, as you surely will once you come within reach of a good Devon voice that is balmy with the winds of the Azores and as soft, you will find their voices tokening these cottagers for saints, their thick golden bread crusts, their eyes so blue for turning often to the open sea, their honey jars, and their open, hearty ways. These people have learned their holiness, not in books or lonely ecstasies, but in living it through sunny afternoons among sheep or ships.

No one but a saint deserves to live beside a Devon lane. The air above it is flowing honey; the largest and bluest of this world's violets fringe it; wild daffodils come truanting through broken walls out of fields that perpetually lift up one's eyes and heart as they slope steeply to meet the clouds. These slopes are as sweet as Scripture hills of healing and comfort. No March is too cold to show the butterpats of primroses the old fairies churn up from Devon sward. All winds above them are full of larks, seen and unseen, blending their quenchless joy with the sound of far away waves; such incense of song goes up forever from Devon lanes, the thanksgiving of green soil to the great gods of sun and rain. And the gods send down benediction in waves of pure gold where the gorse that is blended wine and rose and musk cascades into every valley. To come upon an April cherry thicket set far below one's feet in some twilit sanctuary deep in the folded hills is to see a host of angels waiting for one, winnowing their fragrant wings at the turn of one's road. These lanes are like no others in creation. Grass and pebbles underfoot, walls neither wholly of stone nor of hawthorn, but a rare communion of both, every green

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grace of ferns and tangled vines, of lichened rock and windy blossom. And always these lanes seek out places as they dip into hazel depths or lean up against the sky to give you the sudden glory of the sea, vistas of sheer blue peace. They follow beauty to the tops of all the highest hills; they go down into every lovely valley. For the saints first trod them out, when their white feet were beautiful on the high downs of Devon. The paths take care that you have always against the clouds a ploughman or two going up to glory and leaning their fine manhood against the winds or a church tower right under your feet in a place of amber sunshine and bees.

Nor are the combes of Devon to be matched among the valleys of the world. Deep into the solitude of high moors and downland, out of all reach of the loneliness and the gales that stalk the upland, run narrow valleys full of trees, patchworked with rich fields and gardens, shining with white villages, and ribboned with living waterbrooks. They keep their summer the twelve months around; when other shires are lying under snow and counting the days to the cuckoo's return, sunshine and blowing roses are here. And since the combes are tucked away so snugly, they have held fast to their fairies and their bluebells, their old happiness for men. Old and quaint things last here; folk of the combes go up even now of a May Day morning upon the hills to see the sun dance in the sky and skip like a young kid on the threshold of the new spring. The old pagan spell of the bonfire lit to warm the dying year is in the hearts of Devon boys; November days are wreathed with their smoke runes, and other, brighter fires bloom in the blue distances beside the last flames of the gorse. Wise women are said to live here still who gather herbs by moonlight to make their magic simples; and I believe it, for every Devon cottage is hung with herbs drying among the rafters, and to smell their fragrances is to be healed and whole, body and soul. White



Cottage, Combe Martin, North Devon.

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magic surely must be woven into the old quilted petticoats of the women and the jerkins of the men, for they outlast a lifetime and descend to the generations. The seasons are more than bare names to the people; the autumn is a wistful farewell and the spring the welcoming of a returned neighbor. Every stock and stone, hedgerow and tree, every cup and plate and humble thing is a bosom friend, a friend to keep for life. The little mysterious presences that watch over a household's felicity and keep the cream and butter right have never taken their departure. No Devon hearth has ever a speck of dirt upon it, the linen is driven snow, everything sings within from cat to teakettle. Tall men come home from the shearing or the seining to a place that is like a shrine. Surely the Lares preserve such loveliness.

The very crockery of Devon is a matter of the old earth fairies. It is earthen magic. Men fashion it of Devon clay, bake it in its birthplace, and shape it at home in the cottages on such homely wheels as those of ancient Egypt and Crete. It has all the unevenness that human hands can give it; the weal of happy fingers has worked itself into its substance. The aroma of cottage cooking and the songs of home are glazed into it. And it is painted by these Devon artists of living with cocks and hens, with ships, with the primrose and the rose, the things they have loved best and known best, the designs that have been worked into their lives. The humble poetry of cockerow and of boats homeward bound under the evening star, the first and best and everlasting loves of mankind are painted on these teapots and pitchers for daily use, cups and holders of salt. Here is honest handcraft such as the Middle Ages knew, beauty homemade of the tears and the laughter of men's lives. And that nothing be lacking, homely wisdom and humor of Devon, verses and mottoes, adorn the dishes.

And what can one say of the sea that holds Devon in its arms,

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the frame of the beauty of this high shire? It is another Mediterranean in its blue, yet softer, with mornings when it looks like forget-me-nots. Under hills eleven hundred feet high it turns to darkest emerald. It is mystery and romance unaging. It is the sea of Tristram and the white Iseult. It is whitened by all great and swift sea things of wings, mews and cormorants and gulls. It brings to Devon doorsteps the loneliness men need and the solitude that is the salt and savor of strong lives. The lighthouses along it on a cloudless dawn shine like dewdrops of eternity, sparks of Kingdom Come. How could men be other than straight and true, thew and soul, when they have had these beacons in their homing eyes, year in, year out, through all the days? How might fishermen return to white havens of Devon otherwise than singing, when between the gray banks of fog the high cliffs have shone jasper and golden in the setting sun? No Devon boy but has felt a lift of the heart at the sight of the sea. No man could be other than true-blue to the core in this place of blue beauty, hills and sea. The great winds alone could keep men clean. Here are fit eyries for the Devon Drakes and Raleighs and Grenvilles, yesterday's and tomorrow's. The straight ways of the sea are bred into the bone. Manhood blows red in such a place.

So it comes that Devon folks are the best Devon things of all. The men are tall men with hands like unyielding anchors, problems to their wives in the business of keeping them well breeched, big men and men full of juice and kindliness. They wear their beards in these years when the world has lost its patriarchs, and behind their beards their eyes are like those of boys with an October day before them. They have not lost the art of whittling; the boats they fashion between tides make them crowned kings for a boy to know. They have the lift of heavy seas in their shoulders; and yet they will lift their eyes to follow a rising lark, and they will gather their primroses for their wives to put in bowls. Devon

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menfolk are famous for their heartiness, whether at laughing or dining. Good things to eat and sing they know more about than most; and because they love such, Devon cookery and Devon songs are things of fame. They are ruddy as poppies in cheeks and hearts; the wind and the sea have seen to that. They take their churchgoing, their food and drink, and the babies that climb their knees with a splendid zest. For all their iron and bronze in backs and shoulders their speech is the softest and easiest in the world. Of all men I know they make friends the quickest and the best. And their womenfolks are cut from the same cloth. They have hair like honey in the comb; one does not need to say more. Devon folks make the heart glow; they remind one of the blossoming of the spring cherry; they make one feel glad he has his feet planted on this blue and gold good earth of ours, with honeybees and larks, spring lambs, and women's eyes. Surely, these are saints from the *Golden Legend* of life.

The Devon churches are like the folk, honest and simple, strong to face the wind. They are built high, of Devon gray stone; yet when the sunlight touches them they are things very fair and golden, like dreams almost in their wistful loveliness. Inside they are rough-hewn, with homely carvings of the things of men's everyday callings, sheep and scythes, ships and sheaves of grain. Yet somehow there is a radiance within them one does not get in the tallest cathedrals; and their rough stone walls fill the eyes very full. Always on their high towers are the four Gothic pinnacles; and when the sunshine comes over the sea very low under the heaped-up clouds, it does not take a poet to see in these pinnacles something standing firm in the wind like the four Apostles of Devon prayer, Matthew and Mark, Luke and John. The four great Warders of the Gospels would be proud to watch over such a land, they and the other holy men who loved the sea and seamen. Sometimes, too, when the stars are thick over a quiet sea,

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it is easy to imagine some magnificent ship forever sailing along the dim horizon to keep the things that hurt men's holiness away, a ship with spars that go up to the very pole of night, hung with the lanterns of all the stars.

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THE mid-May afternoon is hazy with the glow that rises from the buttercups. Cuckoos are calling in far Bagley Wood. From lush meadows where cows doze flow tides of warm scents of red clover. The sky is dappled with little clouds that make its blue the deeper. Hedges of may are keeping white holiday. Between pollarded willows and towing path Father Thames is green with a sheen of mayflies taking their joy in their single day of life. In his secluded backwaters that will not know the turmoil of Homeric oar battles today the shy dab-chicks may plunge to their hearts' content and the ducks bill the water for grubs in the glooms of whispering rushes; but on the main river, from Folly Bridge to Iffley Lock, the Old Man of Sleepy Waters thrills with the excitement in the air as the afternoon wears on.

Beside the noble spaces of elms and lawns in Christ Church Meadows, below gray Merton Tower, the college barges moored to the river bank are proud with flags of all colors and all devices known to heraldry. Here blaze collegiate ensigns, from the Gryphon that thrusts his head from the crown of St. Michael's to that first *Alma Mater* to feed her young with her life, the Pelican of Corpus Christi, and the three mystic Lilies flaming on the scarlet of Magdalen. This barge is high of poop and studded with windows like an old-time galleon of the Spanish Main; that low and rakish as a pirate ship with drying sweaters and "shorts" hung out to the breezes instead of the Jolly Roger.

And each of these college boat clubs—clubs that are really boats—is keeping open house today.

*"Crowded barge-tops shine resplendent
With the decorative sex,
While their cavaliers attendant
Strive a tea-cup to annex."*

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Here flow the inevitable tides of tea, and here are new strawberries from the cuckoo-haunted woods of Wytham; here, too, are gaily gowned girls come up from London and Winchester and all places to look on at this annual battle of college oarsmen. They wear the college colors of fortunate youths and set the hearts of bronzed heroes of the sliding seat a-flutter with their clapping, as the crews go by, swinging downstream under the officious eyes of stiff coxswains, Iffleywards. For at last the day of Oxford undergraduate glory has come, and the timidest of students brazenly plays the squire of dames. He fears no more the black dignity of the Proctors and the swift savagery of their minions, the "Bull-dogs," enlisted from the *plebs* to run the culprit down and hold him till the Proctors come up. Hot pursuits and hairbreadth escapes are over for the time; after long months of enforced asceticism the undergraduate has blossomed out, in blazer and flannels, into the witchery of feminine company. The tide of spring is full. His is a gala week such as American collegians, who do not live as he does in the last enclosures of Mediaevalism, never know.

But the barges, anchored as they are near the finish of the course and dignified as they must be by tea things and elderly chaperones, are not the best places to see the races. It is on the other side of the river and over the whole mile of the towpath that the hardier gather. They are stripped for action, the most of them, in "shorts" which leave the knees bare, and they wear little else save blazers of daring hues. Joseph's coat was nothing to these. They are scarlet, cerise, blue, green, black, and all combinations of these; they are ring-streaked and spotted, barber-poled and striped, and edged with contrasting colors. They are set off with crests bearing thistles, lions *rampant* and *passant*, bishops' mitres, cardinals' hats, keys, shells, stars, chevrons, birds,

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and crosses; Mediaeval demonology has been ransacked to give quaintness and color to these college shields.

Here and there one may see plain dark blue blazers with simpler designs of wreath or crown, hunting horn, or oars in chaste white. The wearers of these have attained to something akin to immortality; they are the Varsity "blues," the men who have represented Oxford against Cambridge in major sports. They tower above the mayflies who represent the colleges merely and wear the vivid, transient colors of a day.

All these men are out to follow their colleges with a serpentine pandemonium of megaphones, horns, whistles, rattles, pistols, and yelling up the towpath to glory. If the Englishman takes his rugby and his cricket quietly, he blossoms out into the temperament of Montana when the boats battle. And the graybeards of former studentdom bear the undergraduate gleeful company. They will all thunder up the path abreast of their crews all the way, with throats full of entreaty and dust; they will sing their college on to glory by shouting out its name, quite likely shortened to an undignified pet monosyllable; and quite likely also they will in their eagerness push into the river some of the less partisan and more stationary spectators or be pushed in, or fall in, themselves. Whoever thinks the English unexcitable has never been on the Iffley Track "Eights" Week.

This Thames, the lodestone of this week, is one of the foundation stones of Oxford. Everybody knows that rivers are mothers of empires; there could have been no shadowy glory of Luxor and Karnak, had not the Nile come down like a miracle through a thousand miles of desert sands. Oxford might conceivably have been a city and a university even if the Thames had not seen fit to flow lazily down hither from the sleepy Cotswolds; but it would not have been this Oxford. The Norman overlords found pleasure in the river with its mysterious and deep windings and ammonite

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twistings—should you set your face westward you must cross the seven mystic channels of the stream—for here was a stronghold easy to defend. So they built their keeps above it, and the religious orders that came later set up the great houses of Whitefriars and Blackfriars that, by their very stones, made possible later houses of learning. And if the river no longer brings security from invaders, it brings down the waters of contest. The wild white swans, the birds of the King, haunt it; it is the haunt of the king sport of Oxford and all Britain.

The Thames at Oxford is not a big river. In America it would be called a creek. But there are thirty-odd crews of eight oars, and expert ones, too, that are going to race on it for six successive days on "Eights" Week. It sounds like the poor fisherman trying to get the cloud-capped *genie* into the small bottle. But it is done each year. What the Thames lacks in breadth it offers in length. So the sport is cut to fit the river. The college crews, and second and third crews, start at two boat-length intervals all at once and chase one another upstream for a mile to the finish by the barges at Folly Bridge. That is, those that are very lucky or fairly unlucky row the whole distance. The fortunate and the plainly unfortunate end their work somewhere along the way. In this nose-to-tail affair the boat that speeds up and bumps the boat ahead, which is its particular prey of the day, on the stern has scored, and both bumper and bumpee drop out of the contest. Next day they change places. So it is that the better crews work up day by day towards the head of the river, which means glory immortal and year-long fame. The poorer, of course, drift in the opposite direction, bumped to ignominy and the tail of the procession. If a boat fails to make a bump, and succeeds in remaining unbumped, it has to go through, as its quarry and its pursuer, to the bitter end.

To secure a bump often requires something more than mere

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speed. A gifted cox has saved many a weak eight from disaster by some expert twist of the tiller ropes at the supreme moment, and thereby has gotten his men yards in the lead and perhaps safely away. You must overlap your prey by a good margin before you swing in to give him the *coup de grâce*. Even then, though your bow grind his side, you have not won until the coxswain in the stricken boat throws up his arm. But in doubtful cases, when coxswains are overproud, it is best to sink them and their galley slaves. Then you are sure of it. In the meantime, naturally, delay may mean that the boat behind you has served you as you would have served others and the prospective bumper has become the bumpee,

*"While 'five,' that jovial jester, loudly vows
 'We made our bump, though 'twasn't with our bows!'"*

It can be easily seen that it takes more than a year for good boats far in the rear to reach the top. The order of the finish of this year becomes the order of start the next. How the boats began at first no one seems to know; like best English things it lies in the mists of antiquity. There are so many boats that three divisions are necessary, and this fact accounts for the "sandwich" boats that must row twice the same day, as that which heads Division II and trails at the end of Division I an hour later.

The battles of the rear guard in Divisions II and III today have been rather more spectacular than convincing. In III, New College III men, who knew the pathos of being the tip of the tail, have rammed "Catts" (St. Catherine's) ashore almost at the start in the vehemence of their desire to travel upwards. And this, too, with New's stroke oar snapped off in the first mad splash at the starting gun. Farther up among the ranks of the forlorn Hertford has chased Balliol II in perfect Niagaras of splashing for a wearisome but exciting half mile; Balliol caught

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more crabs than Hertford and hence the bump. "Teddy Hall" (St. Edmund's) has tasted glory by overtaking the rolling boat of Jesus, which seemed to be making as much sideways as headway, in spite of the agonized pleas of Welshmen (Jesus is Wales' choice at Oxford) which to the ears of Americans new to Oxford must have sounded very much like profanity. All the other colleges of the weakest division either got away from their pursuers by more luck than skill, or missed bumping by unskilful rudder work. Some had only a hopeless gap to pursue where the immediate quarry achieved its bump and fell out. Word has been passed through the long crowds that a man who lost an arm in the War is rowing in one of the crews that have just flashed by. Wars make so little difference to the English rowing man!

Division II has also passed with its eight splashing minutes into history. There has been excellent rowing here. The Exeter men stripped of their gaudy coats of the downstream paddling have pulled like eight pieces of clockwork nearer and ever nearer to the flying rudder of Wadham. Slowly the Exeter prow, sharp as an unsheathed sword, has cut its way forward till the Wadham coxswain in his splendor of Maltese Cross has felt the thrilling presence of it and has lashed his men to greater effort, turning his be-megaphoned profile oftener and oftener to look back. The fateful "Gut," scene of so many disasters, sown so thickly with lost hopes in the years gone by, has been entered; but never passed. With a last burst of speed Exeter has shot, and the Cross has gone down into the limbo of forlorn dreams.

Ahead of them the doughty Queensmen have overtaken Lincoln at the very start, before ever the latter had recovered from the fogs of first strokes and unsteadiness or gotten under way. The Lincolmites on the bank were dazed by the suddenness of the doom that swooped upon their crew, before they had even tried their throats. Farther on, Sam Johnson's old college, Pembroke, has

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rowed a solo all the way home, for the lightning struck all around and the gaps before and behind were wide. The morrow will bring the storm and the windy Eagles of Queen's to make prey of them perhaps, but today they are safe.

Greek has met Greek higher up in the procession. The "House" II, for Cardinal Wolsey's Christ Church, "the largest and most magnificent college in Christendom," is called in Latin *Aedes Christi*, has dogged Brasenose the whole length of the river. Five times the giant oarsmen who wear the scarlet hat-and-cords of Wolsey overlapped the wasp-striped B. N. C. men. Five times the "House" cox threw over the rudder. And five bitter times they of the wasp stripes slipped away by the breadth of a split hair. The towing path beside the warriors became Homeric with din as the fight sped on. These two colleges have the wildest and largest hordes of runners. Two mighty avalanches of frenzied men roared up the river bank while the air yellowed with the dust. Pistols spoke making blue fogs in the yellow. "Brasenose! Brasenose!—come on, Brasenose!" the foremost avalanche shouted—at first, and then as voices and bodies were spent—"Snose! Snose!" the cry shortened until at the last one could hear only a hoarse "No! No!"

On their heels thundered seemingly thousands of "House" men, led on by a half-naked man with a monocle! Not once in the wildest of his facial contortions or the most ferocious of his lunging strides did that single glass slip or waver. It glared on, fixed and set, like a beacon light pointing to victory. Let them who think the English blasé, effete, and fallen to insipidity in the monocle remember this maniacal runner leading on his cohorts of the towpath and think a bit deeper. "'House'! 'House'!" he of the monocle yelled, and the mob behind him were one voice with his and gave full throat to his cry. Distant Boar's Hill heard the noise of their making.

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So up and to the finish the "House" boat hung on the rudder tip of Brasenose, and "House" runners trod the hot heels of B. N. C. supporters; only to see the Brasenose shell plunge over the line with an inch of clear water between its stern and the "House" prow. The B. N. C. cox could straighten up his bent chest with its bouquet of jonquils in just pride, for the College that once could wind up the Latin grace each night at dinner with the boast—"Brasenose! by God's grace first on the river!"—though fallen temporarily to Division II, had not slipped downward this day.

For the rest, "Wuggins" (Worcester) led the column of crews home, for there had been a bump ahead and this crew battled only to keep ahead of Brasenose. Magdalen II had overtaken Corpus Christi at the entrance of the "Gut" and speared the boat of the Pelican as that bird would never in her raptest moment have speared herself. This Magdalen crew, expert oarsmen all, rowed a swinging, even stroke that was not to be denied. So the "dead men" of Corpus could do no more than applaud their conquerors as they went by striking out leisurely up-river by rattling their oars in their thwarts. "Well rowed, Magdalen!" the crowds shouted as the College of Lilies crew, rowing easily and gracefully under the eye of their coxswain in flaming scarlet, rowed to the Boathouse to rest for the next race. For Magdalen II had won its way to the top of Division II, which is the bottom of Division I; it was the "sandwich" boat now and as such would row again today among the gods of six o'clock.

But there is more to this "Eights" Week than mere din and straining oarsmen bent glorywards. It is a week of kindlier virtues as well, social as well as athletic. In the interims between races tea and cakes and chatter, luxurious ease and the delight of feminine enthusiasm have held the river. The barges with their spacious tops black and white with men and women, gay with

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parasols and Pre-Raphaelite hat bands, could never hope to accommodate all the holiday crowds. These have overflowed upon the rest of the Thames. From start to finish both sides of the water beyond the ribbon of the race course are carpeted with every kind of craft; and here tea is being brewed over petrol lamps or poured hot from thermos bottles and cakes are going the rounds, and youths and girls and old folks with all their broods of children, sturdy boys and apple-cheeked babies, are taking their ease and their tea. Of course, among the varied craft the punt predominates. While the races were going on these boats were jammed in orderly rafts back of the buoy lines. Along the river a forest of poles stretched as far as the eye could reach, for the polers had tethered their craft by shoving their poles firmly into the bottom against the sides of the punts. But when the last eight has swept by, the poles all begin to sway and bend, to rise and fall as the barriers burst, and all is movement again. Bargemen begin to ply their penny trade again, for there are always people on either bank of any river who must get to the other side at once. It is one of the delusions of life that a better view can be had somewhere else.

The Thames Conservancy men attempt to direct this reanimated pageant of boats from their little pea-pod steamers; but their directions are as chaff before the wind. Canoes dart and scoot everywhere, punts lumber heavily along colliding on all sides. Hopeless tangles of boats and poles jam together and dam up the whole river. Much tea is spilled, and not a few tea things find their way to the bottom to be fished for despairingly by their owners. Some people cannot pull their anchoring poles up, try as they may, and their punts rock with their passionate efforts. Folks on the bank, as folks on the bank always will do, give advice or laugh openly. Faces grow red with vexation. Sharp words are exchanged now and again as some blunderer of waterways

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gets squarely in front of several advancing punts. But in general the whole confusion is a good-natured one. Laughter brims the whole expanse of the river. A wandering comedian, slung with a banjo that people will pay him not to strum, is fishing for pence in the nearer boats with a tiny dip-net on a pole. So the shifting of punts and canoes goes on till the red flag runs up on the O. U. Boathouse, warning all back again behind the buoys; the last race is only thirty-five minutes off.

On the towing path people are scurrying to vantage points. The crowds before were nothing to these now. Those who would rather play tennis while the mice battled swarm now to be in at the battle of the gods. Among the workingmen out in their holiday best struggling with troops of children and carrying babes-in-arms the college runners are racing pell mell to the start. Probably the proudest of all on the path are the venerable barge-keepers, gay in their caps with college crests. They labor along under mountains of sweaters and rowing togs. They are as aloof as old gods on Olympus; but let some of their rivals to kingly fame, who also carry the war gear of college knights, speak slurringly of their college's chances, and they lay aside their dignity and stoop to choicest Billingsgate. And long is the casualty list of words beginning in the letter *H*!

At last the kings of the river come forth—the first ten among the college crews—and row slowly down through walls of cheers to Iffley. They are a pageant of glorious color never to be forgotten. Each crew has its spotless uniform shining like the sun. Shouts go up—"There goes the 'House'!"—"Univ! Univ!"—"Balliol!"—"Well rowed, John's!"—"Oriel!" Girls stand up in the punts pointing out certain ones whose swinging bodies, as they come forward with their bodies between their knees, mean most to them of all the glory of young manhood sweeping past. The "blues" from the March Varsity crew are scattered through

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these college eights; they are keenly sought out by field glasses, and their names are mentioned with awe. All along the way the commands of coxswains ring out—"Come forward!—Are you ready?—Paddle!" And away spurt the boats until the shrill—"Easy all!" Thus speeding and resting by turns the shells move down for the battle of giants.

Now the moored punts which mark the different stations are reached. Coxswains manoeuvre their charges with "Hold her up, Bow!—Paddle, Six and Four!" All the boats turn about, and, their jockeying done, each comes to rest alongside the punt where the boatman with his pole keeps the oars from fouling. The line is passed from a ring on the bank. The cox holds fast to this; thus equal interval between boats is kept. The five-minute gun booms. Sweaters are stripped off and cast ashore to the boatman. The men turn uneasily to eye the crew in front of them; some fidget and fuss with the oars. The wise ones sit silently relaxed.

The strain of waiting begins to tell,

*"As they apply the resin to their palms
Or lithely lip the lemon's loathsome charms."*

Some make sure again that the pads whereon they sit are moist enough to avoid sliding under them; woe and blisters if they do—blisters, too, where they will count! They dip the pads overboard to make sure. The last short instructions are given. Cameras are clicking all about. Some of the more energetic photographers have climbed high stepladders to get better shots.

Bang! the minute gun has gone. The boatmen shove off the shells into the stream. They go on waiting. The seconds are flying; the coxswains keep their eyes glued to their wrist watches. The order is given to come forward. An age-long agony settles upon taut muscles. . . . Later the men will breathe in great

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gasps as they slide, strike, pull, turn the wrists to feather the oars, come forward again. But now each has a tightness in the lungs; there is scarcely any breathing at all. At last, after aeons, cox is counting the slow seconds—"Ten, nine, eight!"—This waiting business is rotten; once they are off they will mind nothing save the feel of the water in the spoon of the blade. But this dragging eternity is terrible.

If you could look into the minds of one of these waiting crews, you would be astounded at the "long, long thoughts" there. Stroke is far away in Mesopotamia by now, threading dead waters below Kut under a hail of Turkish bullets. Seven is sweating beforetime over the nightmare of Final Honor Schools. Six is picking boyhood daisies in far away Ohio. "Seven, six, five, four!"—Five has fallen into a blessed state of pure being and is thinking of just nothing at all. Four is on his ancestral veldt. Three is dozing along some drowsy Kentish byway. Two gazes on the square old Norman tower of Iffley Church, and he is back there in the Middle Ages, black of gown and with his "top ful heighe and smothe y-shore," chanting Latin hymns. . . . Years roll slowly by. . . . "Three, two, one!"—And there goes the double gun like the very crack of doom!

Something like a sigh of relief travels the length of the long crowds. The first strokes are lost in spray, and the splashing shells hurtle forward. The gods are off! College packs start bay-ing like hounds in full cry. Revolvers begin to go. The two long processions, keeping abreast by water and by land, clouded by spray and dust, move swiftly Citywards.

Magdalen II is too tired with one race already to keep pace here and falls quickly behind trailing at the end of the line. St. Michael's crew widen the gap above as they plunge after their mortal foe, Balliol. But the Balliol boat sent on by fierce strokes of its convict-striped men sweeps closer and closer to the laboring

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giants of Oriel. Balliol's two "blués" from the Varsity eight are telling in this three-cornered fight. But Oriel rowers open their mouths the wider and knot their muscles the tighter in the agony of their striving; they gain a yard or two. The "studious Scotchmen" of Balliol quicken their stroke and wipe out Oriel's gain. They speed up to three feet from a bump as the critical narrows of the "Gut" are passed. Row they must, for St. Michael's, coming shooting on the fastest of the three boats, is up within half a length of ramming them. Oriel's cox hugs the shore hoping to make a short turn at the point under the willows and get away into straighter, safer reaches beyond Long Bridges. But Oriel's Four is wabbling with exhaustion, and Three threatens stroke after stroke to catch a fatal crab.

Oriel seems lost, when in a flash the three-cornered fight becomes four-cornered. The St. John's crew, unable to keep a decent interval in front of this bitter tussle, were being gradually overhauled by Oriel. Then like a bolt from the blue St. John's Six caught a prodigious crab and was prodigiously smashed in the wind by the sweeping oar haft. He recovered pluckily in a second; but Oriel was hard upon them. Hope surges high in the breast of the Oriel cox. If only he can make a bump before the Balliol boat has bumped him! In, until the starboard oars graze the shore, he swings his craft. Willow boughs whip his head as he shrieks the count to his laboring men. He does not dare to look back now, but he feels the nearing Balliol prow as if it were a red-hot iron. He knows the instant has come when the Balliol cox will "shoot." Out of the tail of his eye he sees the beak swing in. He wrenches his port-side rope at the very nick of time. Balliol's prow ticks his rudder tip too faintly to be heard, if at all, lurches off and away. His own boat lists terribly, recovers, and shoots out into wider waters. He has timed his escape like an artist; he is safe for the moment; and the John's stern is not two yards

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ahead. The Balliol boat, missing the impact, loses two or three yards, but ploughs fiercely after its quarry. Hardly four yards of troubled wake away St. Michael's comes on with powerful, swinging strokes.

It is a race that will be the talk of Junior Common rooms for years to come. Up the straight reaches of the river to the barges the four boats fly, nose to tail. St. John's with the spurt of despair still avoids the Oriel prow. John's boat is just opposite the home barge, and elderly ladies are brandishing parasols to urge on the plucky crew. Their treble of excitement is drowned by the bass roar of the towpath.

But at last the Oriel prow creeps past the John's stern. The Oriel cox is bracing himself for another try at a bump. Behind, Balliol's coxswain is making ready to do likewise. Both "shoot." By the shadow of a second Oriel is the quicker. Up goes the arm of the John's pilot. Balliol bangs Oriel's stern too late. St. Michael's is shooting on eagerly, swiftly, to finish the rival whom victory has so narrowly eluded. With superhuman dexterity the Balliol cox escapes the tangle of Oriel oars and heads into the vacant space ahead. All hope of glory gone, the hawk has become the prey. Now the striped crew must row as they never have rowed before.

St. Michael's was reputed to be weak this year, and Balliol had expected great things of this heavy crew, some had even dared to dream of the head of the river. So there will be jeers from the ancient and hated neighbor over the wall tonight, if Balliol is bumped. The two vaunted "blues" must pull as they did against Cambridge now. With faces set the men of Balliol sweep past their own barge. A chill of surprise has settled upon the supporters there; they had expected their college to register a quick and easy bump upon Oriel, and here comes the eight dogged madly by St. Michael's! Just above, where the Gryphon

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of St. Michael's lifts its crown-girt neck to make a prow to the barge like that of a Viking ship, every one is standing up and cheering madly with a very different sort of surprise.

The sons of Balliol are feeling the worse for wear; the oars are cruelly hot in blistered hands. Seven's eyes are tightly closed, and he is splashing dangerously. Three's mouth could not be wider, and he wabbles. Up, and ever up leaps the St. Michael's bow, the eight men lathered with sweat but pulling all for glory. One by one the barges slip by. . . . The end is very near. The towpath is a pandemonium. Inch by inch the St. Michael's boat overlaps the Balliol stern. Then with a wrench supreme cox throws over the bow, and the Balliol boat is dented by a crushing blow just on the sunny side of the finish line. All St. Michael's straightway go mad with glee. Deep silence falls like a pall over the Balliol barge and cohorts, and well it may. For there will be no bonfire in "that stately pile" this night. Whatever bumps Balliol will gloat over and sing in this year's Bump Supper, a St. Michael's bump will not be sung. Instead there will be cataracts of blazing furniture pouring from over the enemy's wall to the discomfiture and rage of the College of the Studious.

Above the St. John's boat, Merton of the oars of the Purple Cross, the most graceful of the crews at work this year, has gone up the whole length with the long, slow stroke that has brought glorious defeat so often to Oxford Varsities in days gone by. With never a prospect of overtaking Magdalen I, Merton has been content to row the old English style to the end, to be rewarded at the finish with calm, conservative volleys of hand-clapping.

But there has been a different story to tell of Magdalen I and Christ Church I. Here gods met in victory and defeat. Sweeping on with their long, smooth stroke of incredible swiftness and ease that has the powerful catch at the end of each pull, the men of

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scarlet and Lilies have started their three days' journey to the top of the river and to that last glorious day of "Eights" when all good Magdalen men of the towing path will plunge ecstatically into the river, clothes and all, to escort like Tritons the head-of-the-river crew home to glory. Their crew is easily the best on the river. They have rowed together, the most of them, for years, carrying the colors of Eton ahead of other public schools; they have come to Oxford "trailing clouds of glory" from Eton and Shrewsbury. In front of them they had the best that Oxford's largest college could give. And in that shell of Christ Church at the bow oar rowed our old friend of the monocle—a Varsity "blue" of days before the War. He who had awaited the approach of the zero hour in Flanders with a Cavalier nonchalance had been all goose flesh during the last droning seconds here before action. Once under way, his monocle was still undisturbed in his eye, but his face was grimly set to more serious business than war now as he swung his lithe body between his knees. He fought as he had fought at Ypres, perhaps, or St. Quentin. And the rest of the crew fought with him. But it was not to be. At the very gateway to the "Gut," Magdalen wearing its serene way onward buried its prow in the fragile ribs of the "House" stern. Wolsey could turn in his grave, for once more his Cardinal's pride had come to a great fall. Far away over the sunlit fields Magdalen Tower seemed on that instant to stand out whiter against the sky.

At the very top of things, University, head of the river from the days of 1914, the last "Eights" before this, has fallen after a short struggle with New. The latter has won the crown of oars that two days later will pass inevitably and unchangeably for this year to Magdalen. But today it is New that holds the head, and tonight it will be along the benches in the Hall of New, under the crumbling battlements that belie the name of this very an-

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cient of Oxford colleges, that golden English ale will flow the freest and tongues will speak the loudest of fame won on the waterways.

This night will be thick with dreams of the river in which the oarsman

*"Bumps and over-bumps in breathless dream;
All—except 'six,' who vents a senseless snore!
But 'six' had dreamed of bumps the year before!"*

And the graybeard will live over his far youth again in glory of his son's prowess on the sliding seat:

*"Past the Boat-house, up the Barges,
Swinging, spurting, all the way!
While enthusiastic Pa, ges-
-ticulating, howls 'Hooray!'
For his boat, his boy, are bumping,
And it's more than he can stand,
Till the coxswain signals 'Vanquished!'
Till the coxswain lifts his hand.
'Finely rowed, sir!
I'll be blowed, sir,
But that last long spurt was grand!' "*

Under the mild large stars of Maytime, glory will go her rounds tonight among victors and vanquished; and whispers will be heard, especially by the older and mellower sons who will soon be "going down" to the cities of life beyond Oxford, whispers of music and magic such as only She of the Book and Crowns can make under the starlight of the full tide of spring to men still young enough for dreams and the careless godship of this week of "Eights" and of perfect boating weather. And if new, strange threads of love should be inextricably tangled and woven into the fabric of dreaming, who can wonder?

Bookworms of Bodley

TO see the soundness of Bacon's axiom that "some Bookes are to be . . . Chewed and Digested," one needs only to go to Duke Humfrey's Library. Here in this inner shrine of the reading places of the great Bodleian many a "Full Man" masticates whole tomes. Under the faded *azur* and *or* of the shields set aloft in the rafters the dim sunlight is silvered with the hair and beards of belated patriarchs. Full of years and full of learning, they read prayerfully and passionately on to the grave. I have not heard that any of these venerable men have been found bowed at last to their last sleep at the oaken desks; but I know that such cases there must be. White hair spread upon the sweetness of Augustine's pages . . . there could be no gentler beds of death. If the best sailormen die with their boots on, these men could pray to die with the books they have loved on their knees.

All their lives they have made reading life itself; it has stood them in the stead of wives and children, friends and green fields, roses and ale. They have not stopped reading to eat. Most of them spread their lunches of bread and cheese on handkerchiefs across their pages that no moment of the precious Bodleian day may be lost. The sunlight slants in unnoted, green and blue the loveliness of garden and sky shines at their elbows; outside Oxford beckons in vain,

*"Some from library windows wan
Forth on her gardens, her green spaces,
Peer and turn to their books anon."*

Books are their religion; their little separate stalls are like chapels in a cathedral. When they come upon something that delights them, they laugh aloud, they shout, they sing. At all other

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times they read with bated breath and ecstasy burning at their eyes. Half the towers of the City might slide thundering down, they would not lift their faces from their books.

What are they reading with such gusto?—Mostly it is the Church Fathers. Mediaeval Latin is their chiefest food. And what becomes of the volumes of notes they take?—You may come upon some of them in print in the pathetic books given away for a song, for a penny, on the bookstalls of Oxonian streets. Annotations of ancient theological dogmas, dry chaff of wisdom long in the tomb. But most of their notes, I imagine, are burned by their drab landladies after their notebooks have been closed for good and all. The labor of years becomes their funeral pyre. . . . It does not matter. They had their joy of it; the red of their hearts is in the faded ink. The setting down of wisdom was enough. It was the very light itself. Who are they?—The greater number of them wear the clerical black. Many of them, I fancy, are clergymen retired from their livings; but some of them never have had livings to retire from. There are more unattached clergymen in Oxford to the square rod than in any other place on earth. It is the honey of the Bodleian that draws these bees.

I do not say that these ecstatic workers of the Bodleian are not distracting. They are so indeed to young Cisatlanteans who have been used to libraries where the aged never come, where no people read for long, where shelves are mere storehouses for circulating books. But the Oxford books never leave their sanctuaries, and youth is sparingly accommodated in a place built for maturity. When one enters the temple of Wisdom, one must expect to hear the dronings and the incantations of her priests.

There was one old fellow who had the seat next to mine and between me and the thin north light. He proceeded to pile up his books so high that I sat in a perpetual twilight deciphering my Plotinus. From three thousand miles away and through the veils

Bookworms of Bodley

of several years I can see now that this was the ideal light for such reading as I was doing. But at the time I was vexed. It was not enough, either, that he should shut me from the light and monopolize my desk; his books overran the floor, so that there was no room for my feet; they buried the desk behind; they shouldered me half out of the alcove into the aisle. I don't know what he was about to need so many books constantly; as far as I could tell it was some sort of indexing; such names as I caught in his notes out of the corner of my eye were pure Sanscrit to me—Bracton, Dorotheus, Steuchius Eugubi, Zambranus, Vasques. He may have been digesting the whole of Mediaeval and modern theology. Worst of all, he talked to himself. He would light upon some nugget that would send him chuckling and spluttering off into long monologues. Again he would hum snatches of Gregorian chants. The mysticism of Plotinus is punctuated for me today with his rhapsodies.

Another aged reader suffered from a perpetual cold in the head. Between the mumbling and the chanting of my neighbor I could hear him in the next stall sniffing the way I imagine the hippopotamus must sniff and certainly tumbling about in his sea of books like that ungainly creature of the marshes. A man of great stature and thewed and bearded in heroic wise, who ought to have been back with the old men of tents and flocks and hand-maidens under an Arabian sky, had no fixed seat but used to walk back and forth reading from shelf to shelf, absorbing the entire library *en passant*. His special forte was whistling. I can hear that endless whistle now, pitched in a minor key, and see him towering over my shoulder, wearing the black straw that defied the circling seasons, aureoled with a nimbus of book dust as he shook out volume after volume between his big hands. He never knew that I existed, though time and again he was within an inch of decapitating me with his book covers. Such a stalwart

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man would have bred and founded a nation or two, in the older time; he was wasted in this. He was an indictment of our civilization.

Although I kept grimly to my purpose and finished my Plotinus, in the midst of monologues and whistles and sniffs, Hal, my companion in studies, came to grief. I think it was partly the fault of his subject, though all the venerable readers were partly to blame. It was a particularly bleak one. I doubt if there are ten people on earth who have read the whole of the worthy John Norris of Bemerton. Hal's intellectual adviser said as much when he recommended John to his attention. "There," said he with that rare light of wistful enthusiasm that made him look like a martyr going to the stake, "is a man too long allowed to lie in oblivion—there's your thesis!" So Hal took John. He was to bring the man again to the light of day. Hal advertised for his books all over Europe—none of them had enjoyed a second edition. One by one they had straggled in, backless, dog-eared, foxed, broken, and mildewed with the years of neglect. I think at the end Hal had easily the most complete collection of Norris' works in Christendom. It was larger than that in the Bodleian. But three or four things he never could find; hence he had to read in Duke Humfrey's Library; *hinc illae lachrymae!* Of Norris' ideas the best one can say is that oblivion is sometimes a blessed thing. By school he was a neo-Neo-Platonist. He had all the depth of Dionysius with none of the Arcopagite's height. His drab life was all of a piece with his works. He could write more and say less than any other dullard I have ever read. His paradoxes were without a trace of spice. Plotinus was the *Arabian Nights* to him. That man never could have had a boyhood. It was tragic. For a few weeks Hal pretended something of interest; but it ebbed with the waning of the moon. Yet he did his best and read to the bitter Bodleian end.

Bookworms of Bodley

The end came suddenly and, to me, without warning. The last straw was Hal's ancient seat-mate, a man clearly past eighty with a beard halfway to his knees. He had been trying Hal's soul for weeks by getting down on all fours and wrestling with his bookish problems there. Hal felt so strongly about him that he declared afterwards that he used to grunt like a pig. Hal's nerves were frayed. This last day the old fellow, feeling the draught no doubt on his bald head, had knotted his handkerchief about his temples for a cap. I had seen him before in this headdress; but Hal never had. Lifting his eyes at last from the gray abstractions of Norris which he had been vainly trying to follow for an hour, Hal beheld his venerable neighbor crawling at his feet capped with the handkerchief. . . . His whole nervous system gave way. He left the Bodleian, never to return as a reader of John Norris of Bemerton. He went straight to his adviser and told him it was Hawthorne or insanity for him. Eventually he was granted Hawthorne, and the Bodleian knew him no more.

But the building of Duke Humfrey was designed for the readers of the Norrises in this world. These aged scholars for whom reading has become meat and drink and passion are the heirs of its chill gloom. Young men must forgive them their eccentricities. Young men are merely guests in their home. All this I can perceive clearly now, from a dispassionate distance, though it was different when I was a reader in Bodley. Time has taught me something of wisdom. It will be a sad day, when University Boards have had their way, when Oxford has learned transatlantic efficiency, if they shut away by themselves these men who make books a feast, who kneel and sing at their learning like the makers of ancient prayer.

A Blighted Rose of Sharon

THE two flowers of the Church have found no richer soil to flourish in than Oxford. The Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley. The one has blown best, petal on petal, on the heights of the world, on the mountains of dreams, leaning its mystic and manifold beauty upon the sun, exalted in ritualistic and intricate splendor above all earth's flowers. The other, the Lily, has grown best in the Valley of Humility among shepherds and daisies in the loveliness of open and simple lives.

Yet the centuries have seen to it that both have been at home in Oxford. The Benedictines wore the Lily on their faces as they went about in coarse robes on errands of piety; their naked ankles made white and lovely their feet as they preached. Then the Church, as it grew wealthy in body and spirit, put on the color of the Rose; and her Oxonian sons were like kings, counting over the jewels of earth or the jewels of elaborate ritualism. Wyclif brought back the flower of humility and simplicity and snowed Oxford and England with the Lily. There followed the richness of the Rose again, and in the midst of it new men of the white and simpler flower, Ridley, Latimer, Cranmer, gave up their bodies to white flames outside the Oxford wall. But the Rose withered at last and decayed. Yet Laud of St. John's in the next century dreamt fierce dreams of the terrible loveliness of the Rose that might blow again. And in the next Wesley of Lincoln took up the banner of the Lily in turn, and completed the work that Wyclif had left unfinished four hundred years before. Nor was the last century without its flower; for Newman and the men of the Oxford Movement brought back something of the mystic blossom of many petals and wound the Church with a crimson loveliness. So in this one place one has the whole sweep of reli-

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gion in the histories of its great leaders, the rhythmic systole and diastole of the great, mysterious heart that has kept humanity alive.

And now in these days when the heart-beat seems sometimes faint beyond our power to perceive it, so loudly do our machines and vehicles hum, there is one who still goes about the streets of Oxford with the Rose in his heart, the Rose of the Middle Ages in their high and crimson tide. But, in our alien air, it is a wilted and blighted thing. There are some who believe this man, who holds forth punctually at five each afternoon in front of the Martyrs' Memorial, wholly demented. Most people suppose him to be suffering merely from a milder insanity. He was an Oxford don once, so rumor says; but all that was many years ago. Much learning, the mockers say, has made him mad. So people pass him with a smile as he stands, come sun, come rain, preaching to any that care to listen. Men and women often stop idly for a moment or two, then they pass on. Strangers to Oxford are taken to have a glimpse of him as one of the unique sights of the City. When the weather is bad, though, he speaks to the empty street. Somehow one thinks of Saint Francis, when one remembers, long afterwards, that lonely figure with no audience save deserted taxicabs. There is the pathos about him, too, of the great fools of Shakespeare, the kinsmen of Hamlet.

He is a magnificent ruin of a man, tall, thin, with brows that weigh upon his eyes; and his eyes are full of shadows. Not even his great beard, red yet touched with the snowing of the years, can turn one's gaze from the tragedy of those deep-set eyes. His voice would be music enough to listen to, even though he spoke cockney; but it is the amber and gold of Mediaeval Latin that is on his lips always. That fact alone would turn most of his hearers away smiling at his queerness. The language of the men of the mystic theology is Choctaw to modern men in the street.

A Blighted Rose of Sharon

Even if that were not so, the thoughts of the mystics would fall like seed among the stones on ears that have been deadened by noisy machines. And though a few might understand the men whose books he reads from at length and care to listen, even then this strange man eludes them. Mad, mad, mad . . . for he reads scraps only, bits of ill-assorted wisdom, races on this way and that, concluding nothing, determining nothing--shards of beauty, shapeless pieces of gold. There is no Alpha and no Omega to his discourse. Only the haunting, wistful music of the words themselves. On that he dwells with a fervor and a majestic calmness, as if this alone were enough, as if this were a ritual holy and beatific for the mere saying, a beauty to lay hold on, to bow down before, to worship above life. And so we turn baffled and sadly away.

Yet there comes a day, many years after perhaps, when one remembers that gaunt figure standing there alone in the gray twilight reading his Latin to the empty air. One thinks of that great Rose, which still flames in crystal over many a cathedral doorway, that was blowing once with real and passionate life in the lives of whole nations. Red, and with petals beautiful and flushing as many human faces upturned to a mystic Presence everywhere. And then one thinks of blighted roses, with petals withered, fallen one by one. At such a time there is a haunting sense of something ineffably fair that has been lost from the world; the beauty of holiness. And the lone pathetic preacher of the Martyrs' Memorial becomes a gigantic figure of dread warning standing beside the great highway of the earth where men hurry unheeding on.

Mountains of Merlin

IT is one of the tart proverbs of New England that a poor man always has a dog and the very poor man has two. Poverty must have something to cherish. Whether or not that little country of mountains, harpists, coal, and Lloyd George which hangs on the western flank of England can justly be called poor, it did lose its independence to England earlier than any of the other nationalities of the British Isles. The Black Prince was a Prince of Wales. So it is only right that Wales should have two sleeping heroes who will yet awaken, in some hour of peril, shake again the harp strings of the world, and fire the western skies with the griffin *rampant* of the Celts. Arthur and Merlin. One lies whitely asleep under the apple boughs of Avilion in a fragrant season of everlasting Easter; the other has twisted his sinews into the very old rocks of the Welsh mountains, and his hoary beard floats from some peak lost among the misty hills. Other countries have *one* sleeping warrior. Barbarossa's great beard, last seen like a red dawn over that river in Asia Minor, has grown down through the table in the cave where he sits under the German mountains; above, the ravens drift and swoop, and so his hour is not yet. Charlemagne is not dead, but sleeping in some forgotten corner of Flanders, within the sound of ancient bells you may be sure. Perhaps Drake will be ready to come, up from the depths of Nombre Dios Bay even, when his drum hung at Plymouth sounds the warning that a new Armada is sweeping up the Channel. But Wales, of all lands, has two who sleep and wait.

Merlin or not, there is a magic in his mountains. Nothing is older in this world. Geologists say they are the first mountains created and were once ten times as high. Winds and frosts of the

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ages have riven them and worn them to their gaunt, blue ribs. They are so twisted and contorted that they seem to have life. They have the sentience old ruins have; their decay has made them pathetic. They lean over you at the lighting time of cottage lamps. The highest of them are under a mile; but, since they have their feet deep in the Irish Sea, they seem like mountains out of the *History of Tom Thumb*, those dizzy cliffs that haunted my childhood with their evil shadows lying green on the waves.

These mountains are infinitely lonesome, the more because Roman camps have pitted their sides and Roman bridges still lift feet far from Rome across their streams, because skeletons of castles of the old kings of Wales and Norman overlords clutter their foothills, because cottages smoke at their chimneys and glow at their windows when the shadows of these mountains creep across the twilit world. No places are so lonely as those that are layers of graves, that are dark and rich with human decay and the husks and jewels of human happiness. Perhaps tears and laughter are tangible things; perhaps one may reverse Poe's philosophy and say that the emanations of the human mind and body can shape the contours of hills and color the flowers. No poppies so red as those of Flanders. But this I *do* know: if you wish to feel alone and small and yet a little brother of the stars, if you wish to know what melancholy is, do not go among the virgin pines of the North Woods; go to an Old World place where people have loved and sinned from dim times, where the strength of the dead spreads out in great oaks and dark yews; and there when evening comes on you can feel these things. They are the stuff poetry is made of, they bring shadows, and gleams of light ineffable between, that will lace your brain with *argent* and *sable*. Moonlight on ancient gables of Winchester—here is the color of beauty and rhythm of pity. Thomas Hardy can tell you all this—has told it in all his works from first to last. Only



Ebb Tide, North Wales.

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Hardy forgets the gleams between the shadows that endure as long as the dark.

Wales has this life of the past inbred in its rocks and walls. There is in this land, more than in any other that I know, that range of intensest light to deepest shadow which makes best stories. This place has an air about it. The very sky grows deeper when you cross from England into Wales; clouds become sinister. The comfortable and square English sheep give way to lean and lost scraggly ones; brown and white cattle turn black. The pleasant patchworks of ploughland turn into windy symphonies of heather and shattered rock. Suddenly all the green hills tip up, grow bare and stand with heads together in the clouds. Even the roses and sunshine of fat English boys' cheeks and hair make place for black hair and complexions like snow in moonlight. The people no longer are companionable; they move away from you like their sheep. Of course, their tongue would change, too; and the elusive gutturals of one of the world's oldest languages lift up another barrier to the stranger.

You are in the cradle of the oldest and best fairy stories in the world. These stories were old before ever Geoffrey of Monmouth set down in Latin characters for Europe's delight the wild honey, the amber, and the jet of Celtic fancy. Here is the home of the *Mabinogion*, that maze of moonlight, cherrypetal princesses, and a magician for every day in the year. This is the land of Merlin, who brought the monoliths of Stonehenge by white and awful words out of Ireland and set them up in an English plain; of Uchtryd Varyf Draws (pronounce him if you can!), who spread his red beard over the eight-and-forty rafters in Arthur's Hall; of Sugyn, "who would suck up the sea on which were three hundred ships, so as to leave nothing but a dry strand. He was broad-chested!"

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It was quite natural that hopeless tasks should be set for mad heroes here, and errands to the corners of the earth:

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. I must spread out my hair in order to shave it, and it will never be spread out unless I have the blood of the jet black sorceress, the daughter of the pure white sorceress, from Pen Nant Govid, on the confines of hell. . . .

“Though thou get this, there is yet that which thou wilt not get. I will not have the blood unless I have it warm, and no vessels will keep warm the liquid that is put therein except the bottles of Gwyddolwyn Gorr, which preserve the heat of the liquor that is put into them in the east, until they arrive at the west.”

It was natural, too, that these men should do such feats armed with spears swifter than the fall of the dewdrop from the grass when the dews of June are heaviest; and natural that the maidens they went to win should have hair yellower than the blossoms of the broom, fingers whiter than the cups of the wood anemone, a glance brighter than the three-mewed falcon's, a bosom that made the swan's breast seem black; and, of course, under such maidens' feet four white trefoils would spring up at every step they took. Such tales are kinsmen of rhythmic old Dame Nature herself; they run like her litanies; unforgettable storybook refrains weave themselves through them, “The knife is in the meat, and the drink is in the horn.” For all these people and all these events are the fabric of the first stories of man, very close to the silver miracle of rain, the resurrection of spring flowers, dawn, and the hopeless beauty of the sunset. Why, the only proper costume for a witch is the national dress of Welsh womankind. Try to think of a fairy or describe one, and you are forthwith in Wales.

All these things did not pass away with the old fairies, either.

Mountains of Merlin

Of course Wales is a coalfield for Europe; automobiles have followed good roads into the secret places of the mountains. But something intangible abides. You can see it in the corners of folks' eyes; Welsh harps keep it, and they, of all instruments, are still first cousins of the wind, far thunder in the hills, all sorrowful loveliness of the world. And every house, almost, has its harp. Nobody who has heard Welshmen sing their impromptu songs in an inn around Christmas time can say Merlin is gone. They sit in a circle, just as Celtic people always have done at festivals, for they are stiff of neck and no man shall have precedence. Behind this act of theirs is the very shape of the Round Table, and things older than any round tables at all. They make up their parts as they go, minor chords and cadences more insubstantial than moongleams on running water; the firelight and the frost, dewfall and the circling stars are in their song. The word for all Christmas songs, *carol*, they have made for us, borrowing a word of their Roman conquerors, perhaps, but making it theirs by virtue of their sitting circlewise to tell in music the best fairy story of God.

In a glen below the talking pinewoods of Bettws-y-Coed I found a girl and her grandmother who believed in Merlin, even if they did not say so. I went to their cottage to get the big key, which one is forever getting in North Wales, to have a look at a Christian church which, Welsh folks say, heard the Word before Christianity had dared to lift its head from underground in imperial Rome, before the first stones of the first St. Peter's were laid. The girl let me into her one room that served all purposes save sleeping; one had to go aloft by ladder to the place for that. She got me the key and a crock of milk to boot, stronger and sweeter than any I have tasted since. It was while I was drinking that I noticed the black hangings inside the fireplace move. They turned out to be a seated woman whose aged nose did really touch

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on her chin, or miss it only by a hair's breadth, so old that her hair had turned yellow from white. Her eyes alone were alive; I felt the centuries gimleted upon me. If I had seen a raven appear on her shoulder, I would not have been surprised, or mistletoe wreath her withered hands. Though the girl, who spoke some English, brought the present to me when she said I might know her brother because I came from America and he lived in Utica, New York, I was not deceived. And she gave herself away as a daughter of the *Mabinogion* when we were come to the church. She would not go in, for it was after sunset, she said; things not entirely good can creep into churches even, after the sun is down. So I left her under the lychgate and let myself into the barest of buildings, a square stone interior not much larger than the cottage. Yet it did not take one long standing there to run back in one's mind to naïve old souls, three centuries older than Aidan and Bede, who had the faith to smell sweetness in the graves of holy dead and see pillars of supernal light standing up from holy things into the midnight sky.

I have been very near the spot Merlin or any other magician would choose first to sleep in. It is the Pass of Llyn Ogwen hard by the single rock peak Y Tryfan. I used to walk the ribbon road thither from Capel Curig at twilight. So lost and forsaken a place would furnish a perfect setting for Rider Haggard's *She* or any tale of the Mountains of the Moon. Twisted rocks as big as cathedrals lie as they tumbled down the sides of the chasms on the morning of Creation; they go out of sight into the evil waters of Llyn Ogwen. Bleaker even than Ogwen is Llyn Idwal above it. The grisly dam of Grendel would be at home in such a mere; and I believe one could not look long at its inky waters before one would see fire in the flood and baleful sights there; "it is not a goodly place." Just as no stag hard pressed by the hounds would plunge into the unholy pool in *Beowulf*, so no birds, tradi-

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tion says, will fly over this lake.* Its name, indeed, is the name of the prince who was drowned here by his foster-father. Higher up yawns Twll Du, the Devil's Kitchen, a savage cleft three hundred feet into the bowels of the mountain. There are caves nearby that slant off into the earth with no bottom, Welshmen say; their roofs are supported by columns greater than man has dared to dream of at Luxor. Poe must have visited the Pass of Ogwen in his dreams. On one hand the Llyn blacker than the tarn of Auber; on the other, an incalculable gulf seeming to go to the other side of the earth in its blue mists. And yet the confusions of mountains on both sides bite into the very top of heaven and hang over one's head. The air is full of thunder, as of rivers underground. Some wild streams do leap down in full view, but their white is whiter than most rapids, their pools are greener than belief. Scientists will mumble something of the absence of lime or some such thing that causes this greenness; but there are some things scientists are wise enough not to speak distinctly about. Once I remember seeing a single cottage lamp come out far off over the peat moors. That light made me feel more alone than one standing on the Andes. I never met even a shepherd on that road. To be sure, it was in the dead of winter. Yet I think not even a gaunt Welsh shepherd or his dog that is more wolf than canine, and wiser and shyer than the wolf, cared to be benighted there.

I have walked over the shoulders of Moel Siabod in the light of the full moon. The snow had buried the heather. The mountain stood up brighter than the moon. I had been spending the afternoon sitting on a ruined window ledge of Llewelyn the Great's castle—he built one it seems on every Welsh hill—at Dolwyddelen, and my thoughts had put me into harmony with the night that overtook me going home. I shall always see the shadows of the clouds that rushed over that whiteness without a sound but

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with a fury that seemed more terrific than waterfalls. Only they clung to the top of Siabod and heaped up there like fantastic creatures out of the *Arabian Nights*. The four corners of the sky seemed to be hurtling billowy clouds thither. What a night for Morgen la Fay! Through the checkerboard of light and dark my feet made uncanny noises in the frost. Gawayne rode through many such a night when he spurred Gringolet with his gilt heels through this very land into the wilderness of Wirrel on his way to the Green Knight's chapel; "when the cold clear water shed from the clouds, and froze ere it might fall to the barren earth. . . . Clattering from the crest the cold burn ran, and hung over his head in hard icicles. . . . Many unblithe birds upon bare twigs piteously piped there for pain of the cold." Perhaps it was Moel Siabod that harbored the *bon hostel* he found, "with towers set full thickly about, and fair and wondrous high filioles with carved tops cunningly devised. Chalk-white chimneys enough he saw that gleamed full white on the battlements. So many painted pinnacles were set everywhere, built so thick among the crenellations of the castle, that it verily appeared cut out of paper." Into the midst of my musings suddenly cut a cry that made my spine turn ice. My host, that night, laughed at me and said wise things about a belated curlew. . . . But I never cared to walk so lonely a moor by moonlight again. It thawed my marrowbones, I tell you, when I came to the edge of the ravine that was Capel Curig that evening and saw the twinkle of lights lit by human hands.

During the War I had one or two ticklish moments; but I think I can put my finger on the two occasions when I have been most afraid. Once I guess I pretty nearly left my fingermarks in the sides of a flat-bottomed skiff which my younger brother, more artist than boatbuilder, had made. It was off Cape Small Point, Maine, and the waves, that alternately lifted us so high we could see all too much of the rocks we were passing and then dropped

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us out of sight of all but the curling crests around us, were coming in straight and vigorous from Spain. We had our hopes pinned on one of those coffee-grinder engines; and it had to be wound every minute or so, for it was skipping. Once, I felt the whole ocean lean with us against the shore; one felt the drag of the undertow. But we got around the point.

The other time was on a plateau at the foot of a Welsh mountain. It was only a modest affair; I had picked it out, being forced to mountaineer all by myself since my fellow Oxonian on this reading party was unfit to climb, as a mountain to do in an afternoon. I was making fine speed until I came to this terrace and started across it. Gradually I came to notice that the going was very damp and soggy and getting more so every step. It was nothing but moss underfoot, snow sprinklings in spots and patches of black water with bubbles on them between. I gingerly shoved my alpine stock into the earth. It went its length with hardly any push. I began to remember reading about moss and bogs; one story's end stood out too vividly in my mind—Carver Doone's black arms stretched out of a morass and John Ridd stepping back in fear. I made haste to turn in my tracks. Then it was I made a discovery. My tracks had filled up as if they had never been. I looked for old neighbor the sun, but the sudden clouds that are always coming in without warning from the sea had blotted him out. The contours of the hills roundabout that I knew!—They had been swallowed up also. It was childish to be "turned around" here in the manifest open, in broad daylight. But I was. Then something like panic took me. I struck out blindly and fast, trying every direction. The moss patches above water grew fewer and fewer. Each step was worse. From my knees, I began to sink to my hips. The frozen crust that had betrayed me on now began to disappear. It was just chance that, in leading me into the openest stretch of bog water of all, fitted

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my feet to a thin line of gravel and pebbles that some blessed sluggish stream in the bog's heart had brought down. But it was the wisdom of the caveman that kept me on that slight pavement to safety. I lost it now and then. But I always found it again. And when at last it had led me out to the ledge that rimmed the quicksand, the last starch wilted in my knees, and I sat down very long and still. That night I cautiously led my host up to the subject of bogs. Bogs?—in North Wales?—Some of the finest hell-devils of the species in the world right around us!—One up on the side of Pen Helig (I shuddered).—Had accounted for five unwary mountain climbers in his day!—Had I ever run across any?—I don't know why, but I sheepishly replied, "Oh, no!"—Never go across a flat place in the mountains, he went on. Climb always, even if you have to go all around Robin Hood's barn to do it.

Of course there are sunny things in North Wales, usual ones. Cottages prim and neat, but always with a reserve English houses do not have; no thatch, but austere and perfect slates for roofs. I have been dwelling, though, on the things that made the deepest impression on me. I have tried to justify Merlin and his shadow that lay upon me and the land, it may have been from my reading the *Mabinogion* for Schools, when I was there. The months I lived in North Wales I lived alone, most of the time, save for the companionship of mine host's Sealyham that used to lead me on its four humorous legs to see the best sights to be seen after tea time, the best lakes, the best sunsets. I had to rescue it from a pit I led it into in an abandoned lead mine. It could not manage the footboards, and it tangled itself in the clew of yarn I used to make my return journey sure. I never got to know the Welshmen well; but I learned to give a passable equivalent to the *good-nights* they always say when they meet you after sundown, taking care however to stay on their own side of the road as they

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do it. But boys are boys the world around; I took wordless part in a game they played very much like our scrub baseball. One jovial recollection of Wales is that of a school in full cry. They still study aloud there; you can tell a schoolhouse a full quarter mile away. It makes one think of that one Tom went to in his need in the *Water Babies*; but it is stranger than that because a foreign tongue is being babbled.

The leek, national emblem of Wales, leaves a pleasant taste in the mouth. It is the most seductive of vegetables, a cross between green peas and asparagus, and like other things, fairy gold and the like, it loses its virtue when transported out of its native place. The Welsh fairs are all that fairs should be—for the Welsh, not outlanders. They cackle, and their geese cackle, and it is a wonder to hear them in full swing. Another flash of the sun is the Welsh artist who could meet me in my own language and who had a caravan for his studio. It was a miracle of a wagon, with window boxes, if you please. He had lived all his life in it; his children had been born in it. He hired horses once in a blue moon to pull it to the next picture gallery of the hills where he should work. He made a specialty of sunset colors on the winter mountains. He had done Snowdon from all angles. Switzerland, he swore, could not hold a candle to North Wales for Alpine glows. He had done both; he knew.

After the artist, I shall remember the barber at Trefriw whom I summoned from bed to cut my hair on New Year's night when all good barbers should be at peace. But I had walked fifteen miles to get that haircut, and I was not to be denied. He had his revenge. He gave me such a close clip that I looked for all the world like Von Hindenburg when he had done. It was a most unpopular time to look Teutonic, too. It was in 1917. Anyway, he took one look at his handiwork and said, "Excuse me a moment," and went out, locking the door. He was soon back, but

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with a policeman who asked to look over my passport, identity book, and all. Satisfied with me, in spite of my hair, the policeman turned to my companion. He was from Canada, and it took him and me many minutes to explain that, since Canada was a British dominion, no passport was required of a Canadian. It was the first he had heard of Canada's being any such thing! I was reminded of the War again one morning when I sauntered over Conway Bridge in disreputable knickers and with a large tin of English tobacco in my pocket bulging suspiciously like a bomb. I could not have timed things more perfectly. A troop train rushed over just when I was in the center. The sentry came out of his box and accompanied me all the way, just behind; the thought of his bayonet fascinated me. I did not even think of filling my pipe. I was genuinely glad when he demanded at last to see my papers. Later I learned that a German prison camp nearby was lacking some of its chickens.

But I am bound to return to the matter of moonlight of Merlin's land. The beaches of North Wales are the last stand of romance, in spite of the "developments" which have ruined some of them, as that bay finer than Naples at Llandudno, with crescents of villas and glass-roofed dancing piers that go out into the waters where the men of Modred and Arthur stood and died. In spite of the wheeled bathing machines, in the winter when the piers are deserted and the moon is at the full, one can picture in one's lonely mind that "last weird battle in the west." The sea goes out very far at the ebb, and one can walk on an eternity of wet sands with one's shadow keeping one company, and the mountains around are still and secretive as if they knew all the secrets of the beginning and the end of things, whence we came and whither we are bound. The sea far away tells something of the same story, in a tremendous yet subdued way, as the surf might sound beating on some rampart of the moon.



South Stack Lighthouse, Holyhead.

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But the last memory that I shall keep of this land is of the lighthouses. Toothed and wicked, the Welsh coasts have been the terror of ships from the times of the Romans. So they are studded with lamps up and down where their fangs come the sharpest through the waves. It is a carnival of lights to sail past the Welsh mountains on a clear night. Of all these houses of lamps, South Stack on the giant tooth that ends Holyhead is the most memorable. Sailors say it is the most important light in the world. All the ships going into Liverpool and many bound for Glasgow must turn this corner; they give it a wide berth as it stands beside the dark island where the last Druids were burned alive and the first Christians sang. It is a marvel in its efficiency; it has a corps of experts to feed it; gardens with soil brought from inland furnish its cabbages; walls keep its people from being blown over the cliffs when they come and go. Its jewel flashes by night far out over the Irish Sea; its white tower stands out by day against the unreal, blue, and mystic curtain of Snowdonia. Its majesty and loveliness are seen best, though, from the heights behind. There it rises etched on the calm sea that goes up and up even above the lighthouse top to the knife blade of the ocean's rim. Calm sea, I say, for one sees it at a distance. Underneath one the solid rock quivers with the rhythm of fair weather swells; the flowers of the surf blossom about the windward cliffs where gulls go down so far that they become as bubbles of spray. Another enchantment of Merlin! And through the air, through one's brain goes sweeping the everlasting advance and recession of the sea, a monotonous chant, a dirge, a paeon, telling the same truth over and over. Chopin has tried to tell us what it is in one of his nocturnes. Perhaps we never shall know it until we know the secret rhythm of the rising and setting sun and the other stars.

Sunset Harbors

WHEN I am growing old and the savor has gone out of things, I am not going to creep away into any place at all that happens to be convenient. I am going to give away whatever few chattels I may have left, make myself a pauper and go to England and demand admittance into some one of the almshouses there. The aged poor have the best places of all to live in; they are treated like kings; they are given rooms that only poets deserve in houses that artists paint set in gardens that are sweet and proper outposts of the Elysian Fields themselves. The best of the larks sing for them, the reddest of roses climb their casements, perfect peace goes with them to the hour of the Folding Star.

I have had my eye on several delectable almshouses all along. I have my selections all made. I should be willing to go into one of the narrow little rooms of the Stratford-on-Avon one. I should probably be able to see the Norman tower of St. Michael's from my room, and, in any case, the place is cross-raftered and Elizabethan to the heart's content. I could sit by my window and hear the feet that go endlessly by towards that shrine of the world in Stratford Church. If my garden plot there would be the tiniest, it would make up for it to have next door the Edward Sixth Grammar School where Shakespeare read his Ovid and got his canings like any English schoolboy today and forever. I could dream of the Shakespeares of the morrow that might be hidden in the rosy boys marching past my panes to school.

But I had rather take up my lodgings in the Hospital of Ewelme. It is more out of the currents of life; and that is good for the aged. It is quite four miles from the nearest railroad. Besides, it is nearer Oxford. One must keep near that forever. Best

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of all, the Hospital's destinies are watched over by no less a person than the Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford University. It is well. It is older than the Stratford almshouse; it is as near a school for boys. Age thrives best in aged stone; and old folks ought always to live where there are plenty of boys around. Boys, even better than girls, of course, who are too early in aping their elders, keep a body green. The Ewelme haven has cloisters that are unbelievable; one could be out of doors in all weathers. And the whole place is nothing but geraniums. They line the handrail of the cloister wall in pots, they are set out all along the bottom of the wall in boxes. You have to climb over them to go in at the doors. The only "out" about the place is that it accommodates only thirteen poor men and women at one time. It might be my luck to find it full. And the English poor men and women, once they get into such a place, become perfect octogenarians.

So I have kept a place in my plans for Abingdon. Now Abingdon is full of almshouses. Its citizens have learned the wisdom of being poor. Every other house or so—at least all the likely looking ones—is an almshouse. Let's see, there's St. John's, the one on Ock Street in eighteenth century brick and very inviting, were it not for the ugly street name, the four solid rows of almshouses that cluster, as almshouses always try to do, around the Church and that have here shut the Church entirely off to themselves, Christ's Hospital, modern, Twitty's, and Christ's Hospital, ancient, or the Long Alley almshouse. It is the last I have set my heart upon. It is by far the oldest; the others being but modern upstarts of the sixteenth, seventeenth, or eighteenth centuries. And it is the finest building architecturally in this town whose glory is its architecture. It has all the best features of Ewelme and many more. It is still nearer Oxford. The Thames, small enough to be pastoral still, sweeps by, mirroring the swallows and the clouds of summer skies.

Sunset Harbors

On one side, the east, its cloisters of ancient wood let in the sunlight on the floor patterned with the shadows of lime trees. These limes in spring are sweet with honey scents and balmy with the healing sound of bees; in winter twilights they are candelabra holding up the stars. Between the columns of the limes—what a place to see one's last sunrises! But on the western side there is the peace that passes understanding and a beauty that makes one ache to be needy and old. Lawns like carpets sweep up to the windows set with every flowering shrub and tree of sweet blossoming. It is a place of apples and ivy, old-fashioned flowers and flaking old stone. The casements are the perfect frames for the evening star. And to crown it all, above the long pitch of the dormered roof, over the slender chimneys and above the central cupola, the spire of St. Helen's Church lifts one's very soul to the serene depths of the sky. I grow impatient with my youth when I think of that symphony of gray and gold leaning on the blue. It is not enough that these aged people of Christ's have the almshouse of them all; they must have always in their eyes to the end as perfect a spire as the world can show. No wonder their cheeks look like pippins in November! No wonder they live on and on! Built before Columbus set sail into the west, think of the hours of peace that have made this place a treasury and a sanctuary, a house of beatitude! Yet it, too, has one fault. Like the house at Ewelme it will harbor only thirteen old men and women. Unlucky number!—why *did* the Fathers of the Fraternity of the Golden Cross stick at thirteen? Fifteen would have meant so little more! But I vow I will come and sit in its gardens, if I have to make shift in some other less lovely Abingdon hospital, and pick its Canterbury bells, and be constantly underfoot there.

But honestly I shall be willing and proud to live in any one of the three harbors of healing of my choice. They are all near

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the wellsprings of water by which men live; the font of the church, the fountains of youth, the schools. They are all green places; with ivy and geraniums, grass and trees they keep close to nature and, keeping so, to God. After all the dusty weariness of unfamiliar places they bring one home at last to the doors of the sunset, to the peace of tired little children. By the spires that speak of faith it is good to lie down at the end. I have seen the people who live in these places, and I know they have found at last the wisdom that years and machines cannot alter, that is as old as the angels, and as fair. Walls of beauty to ripen on, to the fullness of the harvest; what a blessing it will be to grow old in such a place! Casements hung with vines to close the eyes upon; the departing will taste like honey in the mouth. If only they will let me keep a few of my best books, it will be a perfect valediction. And, after all, I hope it is Abingdon. The name is full of the evening. The very word is peace.

Book and Crowns

THE coat-of-arms of Oxford, if only there were some of the old metaphysical men of the seventeenth century around to explain it, has rare symbolism in its book and tripled crowns. John Donne was the man who could have done it, Donne the Oxonian wit, soldier, poet, adventurer, satirist, diplomat, scholar, religious controversialist, Dean of St. Paul's, and greatest preacher of his day, who crowded ten great men's lives into his years between leaving Oxford degreeless but Roman Catholic still and filling the space about Paul's Cross with so many worshippers of his Protestant eloquence that many were crushed in the press and taken out for dead. Donne could see the metaphysics of all things, from the Royal James who forced him into the Church, to leaf gold and grave worms. He even catechised himself for death by the marble symbol of his coming dissolution, his own shrouded corpse. And he had gone to the wars, lived in great courts, and read the whole of "Divinity"; so he would have been eminently fitted to appreciate the Oxford teachers of today, most of whom are walking symbols of the University seal in their living.

The learning that goes crowned. These latter day Donnes have something of the crown about them, a certain magnificent gesture of the old kings. They, too, are many of them men who have lived richly, who have put off gowns and gone into the tanks and airplanes of their wars, sat in the seats of empire and rubbed elbows with great statesmen, been great poets, or at least skated over Holland in the Michaelmas vacation or climbed the Fins-teraarhorn in the summer. They are kingly whether they go in gold or gray. The ones who lecture on sweepings from philological dust heaps have that rare Mediaeval faculty of acting the

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Scholiast in a wholehearted way. Those of them who run after the abstruser philosophies are as serene as sanctified monks in an illuminated Book of Hours, as far above our common earthiness. When they elect to interpret the Greeks, they become Greeks in their straightforwardness and their unwillingness to divorce the intellect from the emotions. And those who deal in the crimson and common stuffs of life are very princely merchants indeed.

In any case, the best of the dons make of their learning a matter large enough to spread its pattern over all life. They address themselves to their audiences as if men were still sure that life concealed a great unity which teachers were born to reveal, as if there were still a *summum bonum*, and they the philosophers with the stone of all virtues, as if the world were not yet anatomized psychologically into moribund cells. They talk as if learning were a great and fine and not an intricate thing merely. These best Oxonian lecturers refuse to be methodical or drab. They have the careless inconsequence of men of a more heroic time, of the demigods that were Drakes and Raleighs, casting wide ideas like new continents before the world, and faring on to others, unwilling to advertise or evaluate, too proud to barter or sell. They are men possessing that gift we had thought was forever buried under our mountains of inventions which make life easier, the gift children have and lose with their years, a gusto, a zest in living. Whether it be Greek participles or the Spanish mystics, they go in for it with a relish that shapes the very contours of their brows and makes their words roll unctuously from their tongues. One could not imagine that plain grammar could be so eloquent, or words one mouths every day so full and golden. Their eloquence comes straight down from the Middle Ages, from Aquinas or Saint Francis; for they make their matter, be it the dullest or the brightest, a microcosm of all wisdom, a whole and perfect link in the living chain of God.

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Like some of the best things in life, this kingliness of Oxford lecturers is difficult of approach. The way to the lectures is not easy. In the first place, there is that Old Adam out of the Middle Ages to contend with, the doctrine of Free Will. One may or one may not attend lectures. And the young are not always good choosers. There are no schedules of required fields to be troved of the honey one hives in notebooks. Nor are there rewards of merit given the industrious youth for perfect attendance. The very absence of roll calls has perhaps kept many future Members of Parliament away, and the humanities have, for the same reason, come less often crowned with olive and myrtle into the councils of a nation. The old place of martyrdoms, of Ridley and Latimer, of the Oath of Conformity, today allows undergraduates the liberty of going lectureless away. Like the most precious dew and sunshine of this world, the learning is there free to all who will take it; but, as in life, there is no necessity of finding the good. And we Cisatlanteans have to think historically and remember that in the Mediaeval conception of a university undergraduates were not necessary, or even greatly desired; colleges were congregations of the sage and learned; the untutored were merely countenanced at last in the scheme of things. One college, All Souls, has never let down the bars. In theory, therefore, the lecturers are lights unto themselves and would shine as brightly in solitude or with only a handful of their kindred about them. At the outset, too, one needs to remember how one of the greatest of Oxonian lecturers at the beginning of term used to warn men seeking grists for the examination schools that they had better go elsewhere. Examinations are but the ephemeral concerns of this place. In the words of its best teachers stands the abiding University, the wisdom that outwears the years.

Even though the undergraduate's conscience decide for lectures, there is always the tutor to reckon with next. The captain

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of one's reading campaign often gives one the idea that nothing so becomes certain lectures, or all of them, as the things that keep a man away. Prejudices thrive in the rich soil between the Isis and the Cher. Like their kinsmen of the seventeenth century or of the Heroic Age Oxford tutors are sometimes as great in jealousy as in gesture. Besides, there are more difficulties than dons in the way. It is hard to find out just what the lectures are to be. There are, to be sure, lecture sheets printed; but such are the involutions and ramifications of different schools, such the abbreviations that resemble formulae from the *Kabbala*, and so many and changing the localities of their appearance, now at the porter's lodge, now in the buttery, that one may well be lost until the lectures have passed into history. It is worse than useless to attempt to decipher the *University Gazette*, which resembles the alchemical *Diary* of Dr. Dee, save that it is longer and more opaque and changes each week. And, because it is hung loose-leaved in the Pig Market and other windy places, it is always possible that the sheet you seek has gone the way of the leaves of the Prophetess of Cumae. The next difficulty is the title of the lecture, once you have found it. If it is not too obscure, it is apt to be rather forbidding; there is little that is inviting about *Early Icelandic Iconography* save a certain felicity of vowel sequence. And the mischief is it may not be at all as bleak as its name. In the carcass of Sampson's lion there was honeycomb. The fees for the lectures offer no real obstruction; one pays as many of them as one finds responsible persons to pay, after that one goes and is welcomed unfeeling. But the many temptations by the way in such a place as Oxford City, once one is actually headed lecturewards, are very real and great. Marcus Aurelius on a penny bookstall may keep one from the truth about Pliny the Elder; Sappho's fragments, from Jane Austen. Or more profanely old Sheffield candlesticks that one can really see the cop-

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per shine through may break the ranks of the Roman historians, and a snuff-box, *Louis Quinze*, upset a school of philosophy. Two of the myriad Oxonian dogs may fight. Or else an endless drove of sheep bars the way to your Elizabethans and, worse yet, becomes involved in your bicycle. But, last of all, there is the task of locating the place of the lecture. This takes a toll of fully one half of the persevering remnant. I once tried to run to earth a famous Danish professor who was giving a series of brilliant lectures on the Viking Age; the days slipped by; it was maddening to know that he was somewhere near and that each day the volumes of his wisdom were the fewer by one. When at last I earthed him on the day of his last lecture, in the Chemistry lecture room—of all places!—I felt as Numa Pompilius must have felt with the last of the Sibylline books on his knees. The lecturers get into the most extraordinary places, within bicycle shops, above bookstores, behind tailors; sometimes you must pass through cabbages and pork on the hoof in the market place to come to them. This is one of the secrets of the Oxford learning; it is at home anywhere, even in the very markets of life; it can consecrate any place. Dons of Corpus Christi make it a point to lecture at Jesus, and conversely. Dons are like prophets, they win repute best abroad. Even when once you have fixed them in the labyrinths of Mediaeval alleys, they become peripatetic philosophers and drift like Alice's croquet wickets into unexpected places. The very doorways to learning are hard to find, though you know the halls themselves. Oxonian entrances are unobtrusive. So you can pass by places looking as dusty and untenanted as the battlements of eternity, all silence and starry decay, and never know that two feet away wingéd words are in flight.

Of course, in all these difficulties there is that very obvious of morals—

FORSAN ET HAEC OLIM MEMINISSE IUVABIT.

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Yet in a more serious sense there is a paradox here, and one of the golden ones of Trismegistus. Labor and difficulty make more than the ascent from Avernus winsome. And the dullest of lecturers turn out sometimes to be men full of the milk and honey of human nature, of the spices and amber of the world. Clear, cold waters of Attic syntax turn into the wedding wines of the Bridegroom. The lectures are worth the pains of approach; lamps of early iconography become lamps for the feet that have the years of life before them. At the very least, those trafficking in barren subjects desert them on occasion to speak of pigs and primroses.

The best places for the best lectures are the dining halls of the colleges. It may be there have been pleasanter places to listen to wisdom . . . among the olive groves of Athens . . . under fruit boughs of the Aegean isles where the gatherers had left the topmost golden apples for poets to sing of . . . in the dim sweetness of Mediaeval cloisters. . . . But in these latter days learning has found no better shrine than the halls of Oxford. It is easy to set crowns upon the mind under the portraits of great churchmen, old scholars, and splendid princes. Warriors in armor, archbishops in copes, learned men in the silks and ermine of Erasmus' day; and the gowned lecturer speaking on till he, too, is one of them, and a glorious host are speaking to one across the years. Eye to eye, mouth to mouth, heart to heart, one comes very close to wisdom. One's own gown begins to feel like cloth-of-gold. I think the old painters must have been part alchemists; the quintessence of red manlihood and the honey and amber of good birth have passed over into their pigments; these men have painted the fountains of youth and all immortal and shining things. It comes at last that one need not listen to the words of the teacher. The walls have their tongues, too. And other goodly companies in the stained glass windows take up the tale, men in

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or and *gules*, men with faith for eyes yearning upwards to the other stars. How could a man be cold or indifferent when the long tables before him have freshly trimmed and ready to his hand goose-quills standing in boxes of sand! Pens other than quills profane Miltonic thoughts. And that no sweet or everlasting savor of life be lacking there are wide fireplaces eloquent along their smoky mantels of the feasts of good fellowship of centuries of youth. Up from the kitchens that baked for Sir Philip Sidney drift spicy smells of the loaves and joints for the Sir Philips of tomorrow. Hearty Elizabethan ideas in an aroma of Elizabethan ovens. What weak and vain shadows are years, how little they divide the great sunlight on the earth! Tonight these tables where one sits will wear mugs of ale and platters of red beef instead of inkpots, and the benches not the spiritually but the physically hungry. Learning at Oxford is always cheek by jowl with zestful eating and drinking. About the inkpots the smell of ale; books that smell of Banbury buns; Saint Anthony and the savor of sausages. And when men sit in hall to dine, fragrances of books in the air, living books on the wall. Eating one learns still; and learning is like a feast. So whole an affair a university can be.

Besides, there is more to any lecture than the words and ideas of the teacher, than the lectures of the past from the walls. There are the books of the future, the faces of those who are to lead an empire in every path of life. It is either here or at Cambridge that one will find the best of the golden lads of England, and, lately, the lasses. And human nature ranks even above "Greats" among the subjects offered at Oxford. Most of the lads are keen students of it. They are frank in their admiration for striking faces. While all the lasses take furious notes, many of the lads sketch one another, the lasses, or the don. Some of the dons are in great demand and their halls crowded, not for the sake of

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their periods or their prophecies, but for the sake of their chins and their noses. The notebooks of the Oxonians are like Leonardo da Vinci's, a few of facts and tables, more of design and figure, and most of all the blossoming of the imagination. College poets fill notebooks at lectures. And between their long mock epics of crew races with all the machinery of the gods and goddesses, there runs a thin meander of random remarks about great men, what Shelley's grandfather said in doggerel verse when the name Bysshe was appended to an infant poet unable to defend himself, what Lamb *might* have said to Carlyle but didn't, the latest paradox of a witty don, or a Spoonerism fresh from its New College bakery. *Disiecta membra*, yet somehow with the flush of life upon them; and these Oxonians will not find libraries, in the years to come, valleys of dry bones.

But the teachers are the coronated kings of Oxford. They are essays in the ruddy humanities. There is the one who lectures on Anglo-Saxon grammar. He manages to stretch his matter so that it covers the sounds of barrel organs just outside—they are always just outside Oxonian lectures—and of quarrelling cabmen. He can compete with life and come off with banners flying. The sky spreads blue serenity flowering with summer clouds against his windows; he holds the young men's eyes. He is a fragile little man, whose manipulation of a large teacup looks a miracle; but under his ribs he is oak all through. His talk at times fills his eyes with flames; he loves to speak of the brawny and blond barbarians who tore the muscles like squirming serpents from men's shoulders and bit into the bone-links of monsters. His yearning is for the days when strong men wore wide beards and fought together with spears. Of course, his habitat *would* be the Old School of Geography.

Then there is the Yes-and-No don, with the profile of Dante and the grace of Abelard. A bold generalization to him is the un-

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pardonable sin. Always too much the scholar to make an unsupported assertion, he balances off the *ayes* with an equal phalanx of *noes*; buttresses his cathedrals of scholarship with so many supporting structures that the marvel of his aspiring Gothic mind is hard to discern. But buttresses themselves have their beauty. Another don is a man out of a Mediaeval illumination, faded blue sweetness of a shy heart, a mind foliated with the exquisitely delicate and golden vines of the lessons in things. He divides life into seven jewels with seven virtues, and all Creation is a sermon. He is none the less a Mediaeval preacher, though his subject is modern history. Akin to him is the one whose lecture on Dionysius the Areopagite is a Neo-Platonic ecstasy itself. Another makes his province the eighteenth century; his witticisms have the tang of rare snuff from filigreed snuff-boxes; his facts are marshalled as orderly as the hairs in a Town wig. He is a breath from the coffee-houses. A man who looks perpetually as if his hair were coming off at all points and who has the shoulders of a drayman airs prejudices on authors delicate as rosepetals; though his complexion is like beefsteak, Arnold and Ruskin are too burly and rough for him. One who has studied human nature unwashed in the twilights of South Sea jungles fits the savage into the pageant of man and shows the connection of cannibalism and Damon and Pythias, of "bull-roarers" and the masonic societies. Another does little more than read dusty Italian chronicles in broken English among the broken shards from the Palace of the Axe; but the combination makes a magic thing. There is a lecturer who always lowers his head and mumbles whenever he comes to an important date or name. He is the despair of the women students, the determined note-gleaners. But the notes of his lectures, untroubled by the miasmas of time or personalities, sound like eternal truth and read like passages from the *City of God*. Cuthbert the Celibate is conspicuous both for his voluminous

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knowledge of the Church Fathers and for his voluminous, flaming beard. He wears the brown corded robe of the Cowley Fathers and loves to thunder forth the summer storms of Trismegistus, or breathe the west wind which is Augustine. At times Cuthbert grows militant and spends his hour demolishing the *dicta* of his Roman Catholic rival, setting the spires of the Church already High above the pinnacles of the Eternal City.

Other kings than those who reign permanently here come strolling in. Now it is some wandering American poet who sets the teeth of High Church dons on edge and wins all the young Oxonians forever by picturing, in a ragtime that becomes mystical, old Saint Peter and the Salvation Army bands meeting above in a love feast. Now it is Yeats of the dreamer's tie, moaning his Celtic phrases that one could read backward and find still wistful with beauty. Then the harps of hopeless sadness give place to the bugles and hunting horns of Masfield. He comes like a fresh south breeze from his high place on Boar's Hill. And he brings the salt of the sea, the color of full-blooded man, the sweet miracles of every day, sunrise and larks springing, and best of all the stories by which men live and move and have their being. Or Bin-you comes down from London to lament the lost symmetry of the Ode, the temple among poems. Hilaire Belloc sweeps in and fulminates like a Rabelaisian Jove and delights all of his audience, generously sprinkled with Americans, shouting—

"You say, 'give America time, and she will produce lyric poetry.'—Nonsense! She's had plenty of time. She's used up her time with machinery and canned goods. Make no excuse for her at all. She's inexcusable! Might as well look for lyric poetry in a pachyderm!"

And even as he thunders, the big man melts into zephyrs and sunshine, becomes the lightest of the Graces, calms himself in the

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calms of his own lyrics, clear as mountain brooks, natural as the coming of the first star of the evening and as unforgettable. Then he turns, as he always must turn, to politics; and the clouds gloom again around his brows. Thence, passing to religion, he finishes his inevitable cycle with a passage like one of the great hymns out of the Middle Ages. . . . There is something about the air of Oxford that adds even to the stature of great men, that widens and completes their vistas, that makes them all of a piece.

But the king of all lecturers has joined the ancient kings now, and his going has left a chair that is hard to fill. I do not think there is another man so remembered around the world for making milk and honey of learning as Sir Walter Raleigh. If ever a man deserved a title, it was he. Men of the five continents will recall him sitting in Magdalen Hall below the portrait of Colet, another prince of humane letters such as he. And from the slender grace of the dashing Prince Rupert one's eyes could descend to another as splendid Cavalier. Sir Walter was at ease among the men who have worn the laces and swords and the wisdom of the world. His thoughts had a zest that made the heart glow. He was a great teacher and a great critic because he was a great man. The best lecture I ever heard was Sir Walter Raleigh's on Sir Walter Raleigh, the Elizabethan Poet, Warrior, and Gentleman. The years rolled back; and here was the splendid Courtier of the Great Queen bending over the desk in this tall gray-haired man with the broad brows and magnificent chin. Here was the elder Raleigh, and here was the dignity that wore a jovial face, the scholarliness that went in lace, the naïveté that sweetened robust manhood, the scorn of the mean and low, the religious fervor that went with great deeds, and the passion for all that was new and beautiful and graceful and shining; here was all that made the Elizabethan English the chief heirs of the Renaissance. It is good to have a contemporary of Shakespeare to listen to. And this

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later Raleigh went as light heartedly and as superbly to meet the adventure of adventures as ever the other who wrote his best poem in the shadow of the scaffold. The last of his great books was the history of English War-time aviation, which he called the *Romance of Youth*. His own unending youth took him in his studies for the book to Mesopotamia where he contracted the fever that closed the pages of his work. And his last book was as full as his earlier ones with his abiding love for men who think and do like princes. All his life of teaching and writing, as well as his own example of living, was given to prove that the Scholar-Gentleman is the ideal in all English letters, from the first to the last: not Walt Whitman with his revolutionary morals and ideals, not the "learned barbarism" of modern specialized knowledge had ever obscured that figure:

"There was something profoundly sane, after all, in the ambitions that built New Place and Abbotsford. At the close of a revolutionary century, now that the fogs of a crude moral theory are dissipating, and the dream of a mechanical Utopia, a mere nightmare produced by a surfeit of science, is passing away, it is time to remember our ancestry. Our proudest title is not that we are contemporaries of Darwin, but that we are the descendants of Shakespeare."

That ideal of the Courtier of the Best was the glory of the past and the hope of the years to come for all Englishmen, from the humblest to the highest-born. If ever there were a man of calmness in a troubled age, it was this great teacher. And in reading and resurrecting the past in his deep, mellow voice, he was building also the future for who knows how many young men. Like all the great, under his courtly dignity he kept the secret places of his heart full of simplicity. And like them he had the gift of humor that is the salt of our earth. His lighter moments put the

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winds and the fragrances into the past. He was the Cavalier Scholar to the end.

Perhaps the finest thing about this fine man was his voice. He could make the dullest catalogues of facts read like one of the psalms. Mellow and rich and golden, that voice could bring to life the seventeenth century and the men who made rhetoric the chiefest of the arts and the half of holiness. And Raleigh's words, like the words of the greatest literature, arranged themselves into something of the rhythm of all life, the cadence of the springing flowers, the movement of men's hearts and of the stars. He was the man for Milton, whose greatness is the greatness of the human voice. Milton was his favorite poet to read aloud; and the sublimity and thunder of the cataracts of beauty in *Paradise Lost* swept him along voice and soul, for his voice and soul, like Milton's, were twin harmonies and sons of awe. One will remember him always reading that terrible sermon of Donne's on the horror of falling out of the hands of the living God; his voice rising, falling, swelling the dread diapasons:

"That this God at last, should let this soule goe away, as a smoake, as a vapour, as a bubble, and that then this soule cannot be a smoake, a vapour, nor a bubble, but must lie in darknesse, as long as the Lord of light is light it selfe, and never sparke of that light reach to my soule; What Tophet is not Paradise, what Brimstone is not Amber, what gnashing is not a comfort, what gnawing of the worme is not a tickling, what torment is not a marriage bed to this damnation, to be seclused eternally, eternally, eternally from the sight of God?"

Nor can one ever forget the pathos and the pity this kingly man put into other of Donne's wistful words on the fallen Jezebel:

"When a whirle-winde hath blowne the dust of the Church-yard into the Church, and the man sweeps out the dust of the

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Church into the Church-yard, who will undertake to sift those dusts again, and to pronounce, This is the Patrician, this is the noble flowre, and this the yeomanly, this the Plebeian bran. So is the death of *Jesabel* (*Jesabel* was a Queen) expressed; *They shall not say, this is Jesabel*; not only not wonder that it is, nor pity that it should be, but they shall not say, they shall not know, *This is Jesabel.*”

All queenly things he loved. And Raleigh’s voice was the organ where the old hymn of the kinship of all the ages in weal and woe could play its way into men’s minds. He was one of those rare men who have raised college towers to the height of the cathedrals, who have set great learning beside great faith.

Katabasis

GOING DOWN."

The Iffley cocks were crowing the morning. But it was too dark to see much of the sleeping Village. That was well. It was goodbye.

We handed our luggage and the crib in which the baby still slept into the motor car. The light from the lamps was dim, but Mrs. Mamble could not hide the tears in her eyes even so. Good-bye and good luck! Iffley drifted off into the past.

Silent trees and then houses and more houses. No lights. But the night was growing opal when we crossed the Bridge and Magdalen Tower stood up all gray suddenly to say farewell. By sunshine and starlight and moonlight we had known it; but it was never so lovely as this. Opal and gray. . . . The High went by on both sides unreal as shadow. We turned south for good, and the sea. By Christ Church a college dance was breaking up, men and women in evening dress were walking through the morning twilight, insubstantial as old, old lace. Figures of an ending dream. And they were snuffed out in the mist. The car purred on through densest pearl; then up we and the road went, and the pearl was changing to rose. Up, and we rose into the day before sunrise, hedges dripping, sheep huddled under the trees, the hedgerose waiting for the sun. We were rushing through a vast silence. And the baby slept on.

Below us the mist was growing thin. Great elms came through in places. Our eyes ached as we looked back trying to make out the towers. There was one! Then another came out. But they were so gray by daybreak, so far away already! Then the merciful shoulder of a great hill shut all away. Down, and a village sleeping, yet beginning to yawn. The open country again. Every

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minute we were slipping farther away. All at once the larks began to sing. They had never sung so shrilly before, not even on Shotover above the primroses of March. And we were bidding goodbye.

Now we were out on the great South Road and the great South Downs. Higher and higher we went, yet straight always as an arrow for the sea. The sun came up over Chiltern Hills. Half of England seemed spread below us, wide valleys full of little towns and peace, rivers and forests, gardens and churches. Goodbye. All rose, with the bloom of the morning.

We looked back. Sight of wonder! the whole White City was there, too fair to describe in the whiteness of early day. Snow of loveliness!

"Ye, fare-wel al the snow of ferne yere!"

Spires and towers, but growing distant, distant, fading into memories. In the beauty of the parting they stood, all wistfulness. The baby stirred happily at last in her lifting sleep. The road the Romans built went on and up and rolled on with us through a perfect sunrise. Still we could see the towers. Then suddenly we reached the top of everything, rushed over the crest of the downs. Down. And Oxford turned into a dream.



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